

THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and Science Fiction

DECEMBER 1950



Chesley Bonaparte

Take Two Quiggies

Dianetics: a book review

The Better Mousetrap: a Gavagan's Bar story L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP & FLETCHER PRATT

Process

The Well-Oiled Machine

Another Chance for Casey

and stories by FITZ-JAMES O'BRIEN, IDRIS SEABRIGHT, HERB PAUL

35 CENTS

KRIS NEVILLE

C. DALY KING, Ph.D.

A. E. VAN VOGT

H. B. FYFE

LARRY SIEGEL

A selection of the best stories of fantasy and science fiction, new and old

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VOLUME I, No. 5

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We are happy to announce that, beginning with this issue, THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION steps up from a quarterly to a bimonthly status. The circulation volume that has made this possible is due solely to the support given our venture by you, our readers, and we want each one of you to take this note as an expression of thanks. Rest assured that we will continue our attempts to give you — every other month, now — the best stories by the best authors on that wonderful subject, the-impossible-made-convincing.

The next bimonthly issue, appearing in mid-December, will feature stories by Ray Bradbury, R. Bretnor and Oliver La Farge, and a first published story, by Graves Taylor, that we feel is on a par with any of our previous discoveries — remember Born of Man and Woman and Divine Right . . . ?

Thanks again!

THE EDITORS

Careful scrutiny of assembled data on the animals so far collected for our Bureau of Imaginary Zoology indicates that none of them — hurkles, gnurrs or golen, to refresh your memory — is wholly suitable as a household pet. Kris Neville has remedied this sad lack in giving us the quiggie (the Empirized spelling; in Dobu, the beast is called a kwiggi), advertised as an ideal pet for families large or small. The quiggie is a loutish little animal about the size of a cat, green in color, a docile biped with a pronged tail and silken hair. While cute and appealing, it's about as well co-ordinated as a drunk on roller skates. Only one thing wrong about the quiggie as pet: it's an integral part of the culture of Dobu, which is not the culture of richer, warmer planets. . . .

Take Two Quiggies

by KRIS NEVILLE

"BAD NEWS," said the man from the Culture Team.

The plenipotentiary from Dobu, one Smith by name, looked hurt. He twisted his scrawny neck around to hide his disappointment and shrugged his thin shoulders to show that it really didn't matter. "Ah-so?"

"Sorry, old man," the man from the Culture Team said. "It amounts to about limited quarantine."

The Dobun made a weak gesture with his meatless arm.

"It could be worse," the man from the Culture Team said.

Mr. Smith nodded sadly.

"Don't blame us," the man from the Culture Team said. "I mean, the Culture Team. As near as we can see, you wouldn't louse up our culture if you brought in half your population tomorrow. But of course. . ." He shrugged.

"Thank you," the Dobun said humbly.

"It's the papers, really," the other said. "I suppose you've seen them? Damn' shame about the *Starflight* thing, and all that. But that's the way it is. We know it was a — ah — misunderstanding. But once the papers got hold of it. . . Well, what I mean is, they're still hot under the collar, y'know. But we don't blame you — in Culture."

"Thank you," the Dobun said again.

"So. For a little while — until the papers simmer down, I mean — we'll have to keep you pretty much on your own planet. But there'll be trade — limited, that is — conducted from your unpopulated Valten 6 — a way-station sort of thing. We'll even furnish you a ship to shuttle the cargos to and from Dobu. But that's about the size of it. Sorry."

"I appreciate it," the Dobun said apologetically; he looked glum.

"Maybe a year. No more, at the most. Won't be too bad; you got along before we discovered you, y'know. You'll make out."

"Ah. . . Trade?" Mr. Smith asked anxiously.

"Oh, quite. Of course, we couldn't, say, ship you any war potentials: but aside from that — " He made a sweeping gesture implying there was a wide, unexcluded field remaining.

"We haven't warred for a hundred years. Five hundred years," Mr. Smith said. "We Dobuns are peaceful."

The man from the Culture Team studied the emaciated Dobun and nodded. "I know. Culture knows. I jolly well suspect *State* knows. But the newspapers haven't heard — or, if they have — don't believe — and we can't very well go against them, what?"

"No," Mr. Smith said uncertainly. "No. Of course not."

"Fine. That's cleared up, then. . . Now, about this trading. We'll

help all we can. Count on us. Just steer clear of stuff you could make war with us with, and State'll approve it."

The Dobun sighed.

The man from the Culture Team looked blandly around the office; he ruffled a paper. "I say?"

"Yes?"

"If it's all one to you — well, I mean, if it doesn't matter (no reason why it should, y'know?), I'd like to mention the firm of Jason and Son. Most reputable — ah — and respected firm in our System. Just mention it, that is. Can't recommend, of course: I'm a deuced official and all that. It's all one to me, but I just thought I'd mention it, what?"

"All right," the Dobun said. "I'll see them."

"Fine. I think you'll find — ah — that State will — that is, Jason and Son has worked on these matters before — quarantines, I mean — and they know how to put an agreement through State without a lot of red tape another trading company would have to go through."

"Ah — yes," said Mr. Smith.

The man from the Culture Team nodded happily; business done, he felt expansive. "You wouldn't believe," he said.

"Yes?"

"I mean: it sure takes all kinds, and you wouldn't believe the Cultures we run into. All kinds." He shook his head in some secret disapproval. "Cultures based on ritual. Cultures based on suspicion. Cultures — would you believe it? — based on suicide."

"Ah. . . . ?"

"Yes, it takes all kinds. You really meet some queer ones in this job." He hesitated, peering across his desk at Mr. Smith, making it perfectly obvious that he thought he was seeing one of the queerest right now. "Why," he continued, "there's even a culture based on lying." He leaned back in his chair and grew reflective. "Very dependable, though. You can discount all they say." He snapped forward again. "Well! It takes all kinds to make a universe — know what I mean?"

The Dobun stood up and cleared his throat.

"Well — ah — I thank you, for what you did. I appreciate it, I mean," Mr. Smith said.

The man from the Culture Team waved his hand to signify that it was all

in a day's work. "Oh?" he said. "Uh — before you go. I say, if it's not too much bother, you might tell Mr. Jason that I — ah — casually mentioned his firm."

"I will," Mr. Smith said.

Mr. Smith explained to Mr. Jason that the Dobuns were a poor people; that they had, in short, very little to offer aside from a few hand made trinkets — poor things — a few art pieces: nothing to compete with the superb machine-made multiplicity of conveniences he saw around him. He stared out the window in wonder, even as he spoke, at the parade of passing air cars.

"We've never," he said, "accumulated a superabundance of things. But our few poor wants — humble as they are — sometimes tax our strength. As you can see —" he smiled humbly — "we are not a strong, active people. Perhaps worst we need power: things to plant our fields, and —"

Mr. Jason cleared his throat. "I'm afraid, what with the quarantine, we couldn't consider giving you power sources. But —" He coughed.

"Well," the Dobun said. He paused, as if trying to imagine something else his people might need.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Jason, "I might suggest — ah — I understand it's cold on Dobu?"

"Why, yes," said the Dobun. "It is."

"Well," Mr. Jason said. "I may have the very things for you. Wool articles. Wearing apparel. Warm, soft, cozy."

"Ah. . . ."

"It's all one to me," Mr. Jason said. "I'm trying to oblige you. Fact is, the power equipment would be cheaper: but we can't do business selfish like that, now, can we: want to give you the best I can: hang the cost. You'd be surprised what wool brings on the market: fantastic sums, yes, sir." He looked at Mr. Smith and was relieved to find that he didn't give any indication of knowing what it brought on the market. "Oh, very, very dear. But I do business with satisfied customers: that's the only way, huh?"

"Well. . . ."

"And it's not easy to find something State'll okay. Lots of things you can use to make war with. Lots of things. All kinds, in fact. . . . Now, our job

is to find what you need, what's good for you; and then — if it'll pass State, why, we'll get it for you. Hang the cost, I say!"

"Well. . . ."

"Wool. My God, man! Do you know how bad you need wool? People freezing on your planet every winter for the lack of it."

"On Dobu we. . . ."

"See! It's essential: can't live without it." He leaned sharply forward and fixed Mr. Smith with a glare. "You," he said slowly, "need wool." The effect was hypnotic.

"Well. . . ."

"Fine!" Mr. Jason said. "Now. What do we need from you?" His eyes became beady in an instant. "You've brought samples, of course?"

"We have so little. . . ."

"Oh, come, now," Mr. Jason interrupted. "No apologies. Of course, we can make almost anything right here. Turn out fine 'handmades' by the dozens on our machines. But we're easy to trade with. We like to help — ah — those less fortunate. It's a duty. The responsibility of our unique position; our fine civilization. Yes, sir, the most advanced people have responsibilities, I can tell you. And it's not so easy, sometimes. But we lean over backwards to do right."

"These things —" Mr. Smith began. He bent over an array of baggage. "These things, here. I brought them with me, to show you. . . ."

As he bent over, he inadvertently brushed the catch of a wire cage. The door popped open. Out came the animal that was inside.

"What's that?" Mr. Jason jabbed a finger at the creature.

"That? Oh." Mr. Smith noticed the animal and reached out toward it. "Oh. That. The customs man sent it along to me. It has nothing to do with our trade. It shouldn't have come off the ship at all."

"What is it?"

"It's," said Mr. Smith, "a *kwiggi*."

The *kwiggi* eluded his fingers as he reached for it, and in the process it imitated a drunken sailor tangled in the rigging. It backed up, into a chair, and then it leaped away, in surprise at the sudden contact. It made motions for all the world like trying to scratch its right elbow with its right hand. No luck.

Mr. Smith reached out again. It dived quickly and playfully to the left

and banged its head with a sharp thwack into Mr. Jason's desk. It sat down and rubbed its head with both hands.

"Hummm," said the Great Entrepreneur of Jason and Son, who had been watching with interest while the animal disported itself. "Hummm. A *kwiggi*?"

"Yes," admitted Mr. Smith as he picked the animal up and returned it to the cage.

"What's the good of it?" Mr. Jason asked; and his eyes were narrowed for an instant into greedy slits.

"We eat them," Mr. Smith said apologetically.

"Well!" Mr. Jason said. "You *eat* them, eh?"

"That's what we do. I brought along a pair for my food while I was away from home."

"I — see." Mr. Jason considered. "Then you've already eaten the other one?"

"Oh, dear me, no. These are breeding stock. I eat the offspring. . . . The other one's in a separate cage back on the ship."

"Ah!" said Mr. Jason, experiencing the thrill of a financial brain wave. He tugged his chin out of place with his left hand. What cute pets, he thought. What *cute* pets.

"Hummm, ah." Mr. Jason walked to the cage and looked down, at the *kwiggi*. "Hummm." He rubbed his chin. "Hummm."

"Oh," Mr. Smith said, "you wouldn't be interested in *kwiggis*. You wouldn't want them. Now this article. . . ."

"Wait. Let me see. I could. . . . Well, maybe I'm acting quick — but — after all: a man acts quick in this line — has to — has to, to keep ahead. Look. I might be interested in some of these. Couldn't give you much for them, of course. As you said yourself, they're utterly worthless. But still, I say," he tugged at his chin again, "I just *might* be interested in them."

"A man from the Culture section — a Mr. Hart, I believe — mentioned your name," the Dobun said hopefully, feeling perhaps that Mr. Jason might be more generous knowing him to be sent by a friend.

"Yes," Mr. Jason said absentmindedly. "I'll send him a check Monday."

Wilson, of Comparative Anthropology, dropped in on Charlie Howe of Administration.

"Coffee time," Wilson said.

Charlie Howe looked up. "Uh? . . . Oh . . . hi. Sit."

Wilson sat. "I said, 'Coffee time'."

"I heard you. Minute."

". . . Whatcha doin'?"

"Check slip. Analysis." He went back to his writing.

"So? What on?"

"*Kwiggi*."

"Never heard of 'em."

"Dobun."

"Dobun, eh. What's up?" Wilson asked sharply.

"Shut up, damn it, till I finish."

Wilson broke out a cigarette, listened to the pen scratch on the paper, lit the cigarette.

"There." Charlie Howe straightened. "Have to write it out, first," he explained. "Can't think, talking." He bent across the desk and flipped the recorder switch up. He took the corded mike and read off the information into it.

"Central Lab. Organic. Check station. Preview. Re: *Kwiggi*. Life form: Dobun. Contained in a trading package deal with Jason and Son.

"Two specimens: male and female.

"Observational information. Size: about that of a small cat. Color: green. Docile. Biped. Pronged tail. Silken hair. . . . Preliminary statistics, from Dobun report (attached): Gestation period: eight days. Litter: four to six; sometimes, two. Average life: three years.

"Request routine embargo check.

"Probable commercial value: as personal pets."

He clicked off the recorder.

"*Eight* days?" Wilson asked.

"Says so. Here." Charlie Howe hammered the pen point at a word on a typed buck slip. "No typo, at any rate. I rechecked."

"Umph," Wilson grunted. "Prolific."

Charlie Howe stood up. "You said coffee?"

"Uh-huh."

The two men left the office; as they passed through the door, Wilson said, "All right, give."

Charlie Howe shrugged expressively.

They walked down the path that lead across and down the landscaped hillside toward the modernistic cafeteria. There were a hundred buildings, all told, all small and clean, unobtrusively studding the government preserve. There was a complex network of gravel paths.

"There a report out?"

Charlie Howe snorted. "Routine one. State's probably got it for approval."

"Read it yet?" Wilson asked.

"Sure."

Wilson listened to the gravel crunch under his feet for a moment. Then: "So. I'm assigned to Dobu. So. I walk into your office, and I find you're finishing a check request for commercial trading on it. And State's got a report." He brought his foot down heavily and ground off leather against gravel. "So! Nobody asked us. Nobody told us. Do they think we're mind readers, over there in State? If I hadn't come in on you when I did, Anthropology would never even've heard about it!"

"That's life," Charlie Howe admitted.

"How does State expect us to get a team down there when they won't even co-operate on simple things like this?"

"Doubt if State cares one way or the other," Charlie Howe said with a shrug. He opened the door to the cafeteria, and then he followed Wilson inside.

The cafeteria was quiet. It had all of the modern conveniences. It shined of chrome.

When they were sequestered in a far booth with their coffee, Wilson said, "Now, damn it, give me the dope on this trading deal."

Charlie Howe leveled his spoon with sugar, studied it critically; he turned the spoon sidewise, and the contents spilled into the coffee. "Oh. That. Some jazbo from their government. . . ."

"Smith? Little shrimp? Speaks perfect English?"

"That's the duck. Well: He talked State into okaying a non-war material trading package with Jason and Son."

"What'd he offer?"

"Mostly artwork. Handicraft. Peculiar stuff. Some minerals, I think. I'll bet he gets a lot of junk back, too."

"Well, then, what's the tale on these *kwiggi*? That's the thing I want to know."

"Them? Dobun pets, I guess. Funny little devils. I saw the pair. This geezer — Smith? Yeah, Smith — had them with his bags. Didn't seem anxious to run 'em in on the deal. But you know old man Jason. He got his nose in the wind and started pressuring. So this guy agrees to ship in a consignment. Turned a litter over to us for the Lab. We'll check 'em, and if it's okay, all State has to do is slap on their stamp."

"What're they like?" Wilson asked.

"Cute, maybe you'd say. I don't know. Funny, all right. Eat anything. Sharp teeth. Like needles. Harmless, though. Probably make good pets. But awkward as hell. And when I say awkward, I mean awkward. When one of them gets mixed up, he doesn't look like he can find his fanny with both hands. You can't help laughing. But it's like laughing — well, there's something *sadistic* in it, laughing at a Quiggie, like laughing at a hunch backed jester, if you know what I mean. Anyhow — or maybe because of that — Jason'll make a pot full on 'em alone. High pressure stuff. 'No home in the system should be without a pair.'"

"Nothing else, then, you think?"

"Naah. . . . Lab'll fine-tooth 'em, anyway."

Wilson sipped at the coffee. "Funny one, too, that Smith," he said reflectively.

"Oh?"

"Yeah. I run an interview on arrival. I gave him the song and dance about our Anthro-Teams. But he gives me just a frozen smile. Finally he says, 'At the moment, I can't commit my government.' Damn' right he can't! Not after the *Starflight* stink!"

Charlie Howe shrugged. "I think they'd probably let you put down a team if State wasn't so damn' bull headed. I think they're trying to play along, hoping the quarantine'll blow over. I think the whole thing's more political than anything else."

"I don't trust 'em," Wilson said. He had been reading the newspapers.

Mr. Porter was a middle-size name producer of think pieces. (Editorial writers come in three sizes.) Once upon a time, he had been an idealist, of sorts, possessed of a certain moral consciousness, filled with a certain un-

usual enthusiasm, and obsessed with the importance of the free and independent press. But that was long ago.

When he sang, morosely mellow, late at night, his voice was referred to as a whiskey tenor; there were bottle scars on the vocal chords.

He quit typing, reached into his left hand desk drawer, failed to find what he reached for, and began to curse in a dispirited monotone. Eventually, as righteous indignation increased, the volume became louder.

The office door popped open, and the copy boy asked, "You call for me, Mr. Porter?"

"Where's ma God damn' whiskey?" Mr. Porter croaked.

The copy boy said that he hadn't seen it, honest, he hadn't.

Once Mr. Porter was out of the building, it was a mere minute's walk, at his headlong pace, to the bar at the corner where the working press assembled to curse the city desk, the local administration, and practically everything else under the sun, except the wife and kids.

"Hi, Porky," Warren, of the *News*, called when he came in.

Mr. Porter swiveled his head; his eyebrows went up; and then, spotting Warren, he lumbered across the room to his table and squeezed in. "God damn your bloody eyes," he said — and, to the arriving waitress, "Yours, too."

"Yes, sir," she said. "The usual?"

"Yes," he said.

"Well," Warren said, "why the fire under the boilers today?"

"Some dizzard stole ma whiskey — right out of ma desk drawer, he stole it. Damn' near a full quart. Opened it just before lunch, in fact."

"Tough," said Warren, absently studying the display of sparkling bar glass, of which there was a great variety.

"I was trying to write one of the Old Man's editorials," Mr. Porter said. "I can't do that sober: did you ever know a man to do that sober?"

"Once," Warren said.

Mr. Porter took his drink, drank it like a man, and returned the glass to the waitress.

"Against Dobu," he said.

"Naturally," said Warren, studying the moving lights of the coin-O.

"Usual sheep-dip."

Warren agreed silently.

Mr. Porter hammered the table half heartedly. "He ought to drop the crossword puzzle for a week and find out the facts of life. Honest to Jesus, if he thinks —"

"I know," said Warren. "I know." He waved his hand vaguely. "We've got Bully in our office; don't tell me about it. *He's* running for Councilman."

"A couple more," Mr. Porter brooded, taking the second drink from the waitress, "and I'll be in the mood to tackle it: but sometimes it gets you." And, with increasing vigor, "Know what I mean?"

"Yeah," Warren said; he opened his mouth to follow up his agreement with a personal illustration, but Mr. Porter cut him short.

"Please," he said. "Please. I've got the troubles today." He thumped his left shoulder with the palm of his right hand to show where they were.

"Okay," Warren said.

"Old Man wants a new Dobun story. Says, 'We've been overdoing the *Starflight* thing lately.' Says, 'Stale news,' he says. 'Nobody buys a paper to read stale news. We gotta have something new. Some fine, new outrage, that's what we gotta have,' he says."

Mr. Porter paused. Then: "Okay. It just so happens the police reporter, Harris — you know him, the runty one? hen-pecked? — stumbled across a trading deal between the Dobuns and Jason and Son. So I dug the facts out of State, and I was all ready to splatter it across the page: 'JASON PULLS THE WOOL'. That sort of thing.

"You shoulda seen the Old Man pop his cork when I told him about it. Fit to be tied. Face got red. Blood vessels stood out on his forehead like cordwood."

The Old Man was the Big, Economy Size, name editorial writer; he had responsibilities that most mere mortals wot not of.

"Advertiser, huh?" Warren asked. He was watching the new waitress dust the bar.

"And it was such a pretty little lead," Mr. Porter said. He sighed. "Have to use creative imagination again."

"How about having an Imperial Missionary slapped in the face?" Warren suggested helpfully.

"Be fine — if we only had one on their planet."

Warren shook his head sadly. "Shouldn't let a thing like that — a little thing like that — stop you." He stared at the indirect lighting fixtures.

"Tell you about the trade deal," Mr. Porter said. "Seems Jason and Son are gonna exploit some native fauna: animal pets. Called *kwiggi*. K-w-i-g-g-i. Only now they're to be known as Q-u-i-g-g-i-e. Looks better spelled." He boomed out an artificial laugh.

"Jesus," said Warren.

"Yeah. An' they'll be billed as importations from some miserable system. Some place nobody ever heard of—so the tainted name of Dobu won't contaminate their commercial value.

"Now these Quiggies," Mr. Porter continued, "are the damndest things, themselves. You know what they remind me of? They remind me of a politician trying to find out the climate of opinion on Universal Union Tariff. When you see 'em, you'll know what I mean."

He paused a moment, and then he said, "Some day I'm gonna quit this racket."

Warren was watching the new waitress again. "And write a book," he finished for Mr. Porter.

Mr. Jason beamed at the man from System Wide. "They've had that pair for just a little over a month, and now they've got forty," he said. "And State's cleared 'em, too."

The little man across the desk gave the impression of treasuring each golden word Mr. Jason let fall.

"They're shipping us twenty-five tomorrow," Mr. Jason continued. "I got the farm ready for 'em. There's a lesson in that, boy. Yes, sir, there is: be prepared, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"In that case, you brought the layout with you?"

Mr. Jason's office was an antique. In six generations, not one stick of new furniture had been added. Pictures of the long deceased Jasons and their sons leered down, their eyes hard with business acumen. The current Mr. Jason's desk was cluttered up with nick-nacks. In the vault to the left was the System's finest collection of rare stamps. The current Mr. Jason loved to collect things, and after they were collected, he loved to count them.

"Well . . . no, sir," said the man from System Wide. "But we had expected it wouldn't be until a month after the first shipment arrived from Dobu. . . ."

"From Xantope, my boy," Mr. Jason said. "We must remember that. Not Dobu. Xantope."

"Yes, sir."

"Now. Surely you have something in mind. You don't intend to have me sit here listening to a vacuum?"

The little man reddened. "Uh. . . . No, sir. That is — Well, for instance, Mr. Morrow — he's Mr. William's aide — he suggested that maybe we run an initial series — to get reader reaction, I mean — in the *Express*. On what noted people have to say about Quiggies as household pets." He rummaged in his brief case, talking all the while. "I have here an indorsement (the five thousand credit class) from Mr. Athelwood Carlton, the explorer — ha — right here it is — yes, this is it." He removed the paper and began to read. "I'm quoting. 'I have been privileged to purchase one of the first Quiggies offered for sale in this system, and I —' "

"No." Mr. Jason shook his head. "No. It needs pep. No zest in it. No enthusiasm. No fire!"

"Yes, sir; quite right there. Uh. . . . Well, we thought you might like it for us to run a picture of explorer Carlton getting out of *The Ranger*, standing there on the platform wav —"

"No," said Mr. Jason. "That's not *quite* what I had in mind. I'm afraid it won't do. I want something that'll shock 'em. Hit 'em between the eyes, like with a hammer, see. Something like — FROM XANTOPE!" He held his hands wide apart. "In great big type, so they'll stop to see what it's all about."

"Yes, sir," said the man from System Wide, scribbling in his notebook.

"Yes, sir. That's very good."

"Then after that — Maybe we can use the indorsements."

Mr. Jason rubbed his hands together. "There's going to be money in this. Lots of money. I'm prepared to spend a half million credits — that's a half *million*, my boy: figure your commission on that! Everywhere people go, I want 'em to see the word. I want everybody to be talkin' about Quiggies. I want teleo-comedians to make jokes about Quiggies."

"Yes, sir."

"If a man doesn't have a Quiggie, I want him to feel like he's a social outcast."

"Ha-ha," said the little man from System Wide. "That's very good."

"I want a slogan. Something like — ah — the one I thought of coming to the office this morning. A Quiggie is cuddly."

"Oh, that's very good," said the man from System Wide. "That's very good indeed. A Quiggie is cuddly. I'll write that right down."

". . . All kinds of money in Quiggies," said Mr. Jason, who had a nose for that sort of thing. "And not just here, either. I'm already working out arrangements with three other systems to handle distribution there. Didn't know that, did you? No, I thought not. But Jason and Son don't let grass grow. That's why I say it's going to be big. Three systems, four systems, pretty soon all the systems. A million worlds; and every one of them having Quiggie pets supplied by Jason and Son. You can think about that: put it in your advertising maybe."

"Yes, sir. We'll do just that."

"And I'll think of some other things, too. We're going to hit this from all angles."

"Yes, sir," the man agreed.

"Good. Good. I'll want to see the first layout on this first thing in the morning."

"But Mr. Jason —" the advertising man protested, thinking, perhaps, of a long, bleak night and sweat and coffee and stale tasting cigarettes.

"But? But! I don't care if you have to keep the whole staff up. I want that layout."

"Yes, sir. I understand, sir. I'll have it over here first thing in the morning."

"All right, then. See that you do. . . ."

"It's a great field you're in, boy. Great. It's what makes the wheels go 'round: advertising. We're a race of people who depend on it. Production *and* salesmanship are the keys to our prosperity. Stop advertising, you couldn't sell, and how would that be? Without advertising, people wouldn't have half the stuff they got."

"Yes, sir."

"Now. Don't sit around, boy. Waste no time. Be up and doing." He snapped his fingers twice at the retreating figure.

As soon as the door closed behind the man, Mr. Jason flicked on the frequency phone. "Get me Williams, of System Wide." Within seconds, someone was on the other end of the frequency.

"Williams, I want. . . . Oh. Hello, Johnson. No. I want Williams. . . . Oh? . . . Well, this is Jason. . . . That's better."

After a moment, he heard the familiar voice on the other end. "Williams? Jason. A little ass from your company just left. Thought I'd better phone. Look. I'd like a two page spread in the Sunday issue of the *Express*. . . . What? . . . I don't care if it is — you can tell 'em to hold it, can't you, and get the copy out tomorrow? . . . Look. Who pays for their paper, your advertising agency, or their subscribers? . . . Yeah. Yeah. . . . That's better. . . . And look, old man, ask them to take it easy on Dobu — just in case. . . . No. I don't expect anyone to cause a stink, but you know. . . .

"Maybe they'd run an editorial on the Quiggies, too; maybe Cal Hustvedt would do one. . . . Sure, he's their best, but. . . . Oh. Yeah, Porter *would* do. . . . Human interest, you know. . . . Naturally. We'll pay if you can't get it for goodwill. . . . What? . . . No. No. If you have to talk to Hartz, tell him there's absolutely no danger of Quiggies falling into the hands of the vivisectionists."

"You become fond of them," said Mrs. Leota Harris. "They're better than lap dogs, any day."

The Quiggle perked up its ears, almost as if it understood.

"See. They're intelligent."

"Well," her husband said, "I've got to admit they're smart. But I don't think they're affectionate. And that's what counts."

"You just don't like them," she said accusingly.

"So I don't like 'em," he said. "All right. I don't like 'em. I think they're selfish. I think they're lazy. I don't think they give a damn about people."

"You like bird dogs, I know."

"So," he said, "I like bird dogs."

"My God!" said Mrs. Leota Harris. "Imagine having a bird dog in this little, dinky apartment."

"I didn't say. . . ."

"I know," she said, sighing in martyrdom.

He walked to the window and looked out at the little lights sparkling below him. He slapped his hands together behind his back. There were a lot of buildings out there.

"Look," he said. "All I said was, 'I don't think a Quiggie is affectionate.'" "I heard you."

The Quiggie looked at Mr. Harris and began to lick its soft, green fur. It wiggled its pronged tail disgustedly.

"I think they're cute," said the woman. "Come here," she told the Quiggie.

It looked up at her with its bright, brown eyes. Almost indifferently it began to get up. It gave the impression of being clumsily double-jointed. It started to amble across the room. In the process, it stumbled against a chair, shook its head sadly, and veered to the left, almost tripping over its tail.

"It looks like a drunken lout," Mr. Harris said.

The Quiggie glared at him.

"You'll hurt its feelings," his wife said.

The Quiggie got its legs twisted up and stopped to look persecuted.

"See," she said. "How cute!"

The Quiggie backed up a step and upset a floor lamp.

Finally, however, it was in front of her. It climbed into her lap, using its opposed thumbs on her leg as if it were a tree trunk.

She patted its head. "My cute little Awkward," she said. It waved its tail, slapping her in the face. She held the tail down.

"See," she said. "It comes to me."

"Of course. But it doesn't really *like* you. It just tolerates you, that's all."

She sighed again.

"I can't see one lying on your grave, mourning when you're dead," her husband said. "I can't see one licking your hand."

"I don't want my hand licked," she said.

"That," he said, "is a lie."

"I meant by an *animal*."

"Skip it," he said. "Sorry I said it."

The Quiggie got down from her lap, falling all over itself, and started, more or less upright, on its hind legs, for its corner. Once there, it tried unsuccessfully to scratch its back on a table leg, and then it finally lay down in disgust. It looked at the people out of the corner of its eye for a moment, and then it went to sleep.

"It's lonely," she said. "It wants a mate."

"All right, get it a mate," he said. "I don't care. But I say a dog doesn't moon like that damn' thing. A dog likes to be around people. It's not forever laying in a corner. It's setting at your feet. I think all a Quiggie is interested in is sex."

"How do you know a dog isn't?" Mrs. Leota Harris said.

"I give up," her husband said. "I just flat give up. That's all."

"I wonder who does these things?" Mr. Saunders asked.

"What things, honey?"

"These things," he said. He hit the page with the back of his hand.

"Oh. The editorials. A man by the name of Porter, I think."

"Well, who ever he is, he's right. I mean, he's got a lot of good ideas: Take this one, now. . . ." He peered down at the print. " 'It is time (it says) for the Empire to wake up to the Dobun menace. Last year fifty lives were lost.' (He means the *Starflight*, my dear.) '*And as yet no satisfactory reparation has been made.* Further, **THEY WELCOMED THE QUARANTINE!** And this is significant. They welcomed the quarantine. What does that seem to mean? It means just this: they're glad to keep us out of their system. **THEY ARE HIDING SOMETHING.** And what are they hiding? **THERE IS ONLY ONE ANSWER FROM THE FACTS. THEY ARE BUILDING UP A WAR POTENTIAL!** " "

Mr. Saunders said, "I mean, he's got something there. Why did they take to the quarantine so easy? It's not natural. And there just can't be any other answer."

"Yes, dear."

"Well, if I were in the Council, I'd soon see about that. Why, we'd just take a fleet and go down there and not put up with any of their nonsense."

"You're perfectly right," she said.

Mr. Saunders smiled. "Yes, sir. There's no reason to let those things get out of hand, I tell you. The time to stop them is *now*, not tomorrow or the next day, but *now*. Before they get a chance to do — whatever they're going to do."

"Pop?" asked Willie.

". . . . Yes?"

"Speaking of doin' things now, what about the Quiggie? I mean, you never did get one."

"Oh, yes. That. . . I'll tell you, son. If you want to run down to the pet shop with me Saturday —" He gestured. He let his voice trail off.

"Gee; that'd be swell."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Saunders. "Really I don't, Ed. You know how this is such a *small* apartment. And we don't have room for a pet."

She looked around her, and automatically she numbered the gadgets with her eyes. It made her feel good, but, at the same time, it oppressed her slightly, as if she lacked, somehow, enough breathing room.

"Now," Mr. Saunders said, in reprimand. "We've already been over that before."

"They don't take up much room. And they aren't a bit of bother. It says here —" Willie picked up a magazine and began to thumb the pages — "right here: 'As pets, the Quiggies are excellent. They are quiet, friendly and amusing. They require very little space. A box in the corner of the room will do. They will eat almost anything, require no special temperature, and are one of the healthiest, hardiest life forms in the universe."

" 'And *any* home with a Quiggie will be a jolly home! You can count on a Quiggie to keep you laughing.' " Willie looked up. "That's right, mom. They're funny; *really* funny. Why, I was over at Joe's, and do you know what one of their Quiggies did? He backed up and caught his tail in the 'lectric fan. Course the rubber blades didn't hurt it none, but the things it done afterwards. Joe and me could hardly get over laughing, it was so funny." He looked down at the magazine again. "And it says, 'These clean, sanitary Pets To Laugh At will be the center of every household. It's like having your very own private comedian right in your own living room.' "

"That's right, Marte."

"Oh, I suppose so."

"Mom? . . . Jerry's folks got two of them just last month. And he says they're swell, too. They've got eighteen, now. They're gonna sell them. We could get a pair and raise Quiggies and make all kinds of money, I'll bet. Everybody's buyin' 'em."

Mr. Saunders laughed. "I'm afraid we'll get in on that a little late. . . . But there were fortunes made, raising Quiggies six, eight months ago. At first. But now too many people's got the same idea, and everybody's got them for sale."

"Except us."

"Yes. Well. . . . You say Jerry's folks want to sell some?"

"Yes."

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you the money, and you can run over tonight and buy a pair." Mr. Saunders fished out his bill fold. "Ten credits, I guess?"

"Uh-huh. I think so."

Mr. Saunders handed over the two bills.

Willie hurried out the front door.

But he was not moving as fast as he was when he returned a few minutes later.

"He bit me!" Willie announced, waving his hand about, showing the imprint of sharp teeth.

"*What* bit you, Willie?"

"A Quiggie! It hurts."

"Here. . . . Let's see," Mrs. Saunders said. "Hum. Pretty deep. Get the iodine, Ed."

"Oh, not the iodine!"

"Yes, the iodine."

"But it'll *hurt*."

"Nonsense," Mrs. Saunders said. "Now. How did you happen to get bit?"

"Well," Willie said, "when I went out, I seen one playing in the yard. It had got all tangled up with the hose. And then it got so mad it tried to *chew* its way out. I stood there just laughing fit to kill, it looked so funny. Then after a minute when it got loose, it turned and jumped on the hose like it wanted to stomp it, and then it got all tangled up again, and its tail was waving away like nothing I ever seen.

"Well, I run up to it, and it got loose again and sidled away a couple of steps — like it was wild. Well, I just figured it had escaped from somewhere, and all I had to do was catch it, and we could save the ten credits. And then it jumped up and it *bit* me!"

"Humph," said Mr. Saunders.

"Hand it here, Ed." She took the iodine and applied it.

"Ow — oh — *ow!*"

Willie waved his hand back and forth.

"I thought you said they were *friendly*," Mrs. Saunders said to her husband.

"It says they are, right here in the book," he answered. "I guess that one must have escaped or something, and maybe they get wild, that way. *I* don't know."

"Well," she said, "I know one thing. We're not going to have any Quiggies in *this* house."

Jackson N. Snow was a general; he had a long career of active service on the fringes of Empire. He was, in the fullest sense, a military man. Consequently, it pained him to use his troops against civilians.

He looked out the window, into the street. A milling mob below appeared as a variegated splotch of color.

"Damned shame," he said. He turned. "Colonel! It's that damn' newspaper."

The Colonel picked up the paper from the desk and scanned the lead story. "I agree," he said. "Listen to this: 'Certainly the members of the Department of State who sanctioned the trading deal should stand before the bar of justice. WITH THEM SHOULD STAND MR. JASON. This newspaper has always championed the constitutional processes, slow and uncertain as they sometimes seem to be.

" 'TRUE THAT THESE ARE DESPERATE DAYS! TRUE THAT THIS SYSTEM IS IN A *LIFE AND DEATH* STRUGGLE —

" 'But we must still remember our traditional sense of —' "

"Enough!" snapped the general. He turned to the window again. "I hope there won't be any bloodshed. Jason did get away, you know? We flew him out to Central. But try and tell the mob down there that."

He walked to his desk and slumped wearily to his seat. "I know how they feel. Feel the same way myself; know what I'd like to do?"

"I can guess."

"Yeah. Take a fleet and go into the Dobun defenses. I could open them up like a can opener opens a can. I don't care *how* strong they are."

"Sure: but what good would it do?"

"None. That's the hell of it."

"Well, I wish we had something to fight besides those damn' Quiggies." The Colonel fingered the flash pistol at his side. "I remember the fighting on Meizque. Now *that* was something!"

The general agreed.

"What do you think we're going to do now?" the Colonel asked.

"I don't know. I just don't know. Council has about decided to abandon the planet. But where can we go? The whole system's infected. God knows, maybe the whole universe!"

The Colonel nodded. "Damned right. And wait'll the people hear about tighter rations; — and —"

The phone rang.

"Hello? This is Snow. . . . *What?* . . . Good God!" He sat back. "Yes. Yes. I'll get them ready."

The Colonel raised his eyebrows as the general slammed down the phone.

"You know our warehouse stock?"

"Yes," the Colonel said.

"They got it. Last night."

The Colonel shrugged. "They can eat anything. No one's fault, of course, about the warehouse. Not yours, not mine. Not when the Quiggies are everywhere."

The general became profane.

"Well, well," the Colonel said dryly. "Looky here." Very slowly his hand inched toward his flash pistol; he slipped it out of the holster.

Sitting on the window sill was a Quiggie, its big, brown eyes glaring at the Colonel. It hunched its muscles, bared its teeth, teeter-tottered on the ledge, and then leaped at his throat.

The Colonel's flash shot caught it in mid air, and it fell dead and broken.

"At least there's still one thing they're not immune to," said the Colonel.

"It probably won't be long, though," the general said. "I wonder how that one got up here?"

The Colonel shrugged. He walked to the window and looked down. "The crowd's broke up. I guess there's an army of them coming."

"Yes, I guess so."

"We'll have to stay?" the Colonel asked.

"No. Not you. Not unless you want to. *I'll* stay, of course."

"I'll stay," the Colonel said. He closed his eyes and pictured an army of Quiggies, awkward, stumbling, clownish, and thoroughly vicious.

He could see them fording rivers and rolling in living tidal waves across open plains. He could hear the sharp click, click, chomp of their jaws. He could imagine them creeping wet and shivering out of the North Pacific

and then sliding and slipping across an iceburg after a walrus. He could see them dropping from jungle vines, and then looking hurt to find the ground so hard. He could see them daintily scratching blood out of their whiskers, and then continuing on, in their mad, deadly reelings, after everything that walked.

The first time he had ever seen a Quiggie, the man who owned it had set it on a plank extended between two chairs. The plank was a foot wide, and it was all the Quiggie could do to keep its balance as it walked. He could imagine them veering and careening and bumping together as they crowded upon and stormed across the great bridge networks on earth, even there having trouble with their balance, and occasionally plunging off ludicrously into the water, only to land swimming awkwardly for shore. He could . . .

The Colonel walked over and sat down. He inspected his gun. "For every one you kill, there's always two more."

"Yeah."

The Colonel counted his clips. "Six left. Six times fifty is three hundred. Minus one. Two hundred and ninety-nine. I'll get two hundred and ninety-nine of them."

"Damn the Dobuns," the general said. "I can see 'em right now. Waiting to take the whole universe over, when there's nothing left but them and the Quiggies."

Mr. Smith, the ex-plenipotentiary, ate his evening meal: two bites of fried *kwiggi*. He twisted uncomfortably in his long, woolen underwear. But he put up with the scratchiness of the rough wool, for, after all, it was cold on Dobu.

He had a very rude and simple house. There were only necessities, and, by Empire standards, it left something to be desired.

He was waiting for Znathao to send his son over; Mr. Smith was supposed to give the son a lecture on social living and tradition. Mr. Smith was acknowledged to be the wisest man in the whole village, and, as such, performed these little services.

The son arrived shortly.

"Please sit down," said Mr. Smith.

The boy sat down, uncomfortably.

"Ah," Mr. Smith said. "Ah. Your father tells me you put the male *kwiggi* in with the female again today."

"Yes," the boy said defiantly, "I did."

"Well," Mr. Smith said, "you'll just have to drown the little ones when they're born."

"I won't."

The refusal went deep into the bed rock of Mr. Smith's society. "Why," he said, "if you let *kwiggis* breed, pretty soon we'd have all we wanted to eat, and how would you like that, then, to be a *glutton*?"

"I'd like it."

Mr. Smith sighed. He peered at the lad myopically. But his shock was not as severe as that a traditionalist would have felt, for he had brought back some books on Cultures from his trading trip, and he realized that some people can never adjust to their own society. It was in the natural order of things.

"You've got the wrong attitude," he said.

He wished the Empire would hurry up and lift the quarantine. When they did, the Dobuns could send their misfits, like this boy, to them.

"Look, son," he said. "Promise me something."

"I don't promise nothing."

"Look. You'd like to go to a place where you could eat all you want, wouldn't you? Where you'd have plenty of everything?"

". . . . Gee. . . . Yes."

"Well," Mr. Smith said. "There is such a place. They don't think it's immoral to eat and eat."

He wished he had known that when their first ship, the *Starflight*, had landed. If the Dobuns had been able to understand the crew, the Dobuns would have given them food. But, Mr. Smith asked himself, who'd have thought they'd starve to death so soon? He shuddered. Even dead, they'd looked disgustingly fat.

"I've been there," he said. "And you could go, too. No. You *can* go. Very soon, now."

Surely, he thought, they'd lift the quarantine very shortly now. There hadn't been an Empire ship at Valten 6 for almost six months, and that was a good sign. They were about to relent.

"If," he said, "you'll be good."

" . . . Well."

"We traded them some *kwiggis*," Mr. Smith added as a clincher. "I'll bet they've got lots, now. You could have a whole *kwiggi* to eat, if you wanted one."

"Gee. . . . A *whole kwiggi*?"

"You'd like that?"

"You bet I would!"

"Well," Mr. Smith said, "as soon as they let us send people to them, I'll talk to your father. I'm sure he'll let you go."

"Gee."

"If you're good 'til then. And don't put *kwiggis* together and things like that."

" . . . All right. I'll be good. I promise."

The business was over, and Mr. Smith felt expansive.

"You know, boy," he said, "there's all kinds of Cultures. Some of them, you wouldn't believe. The queerest one —" He bent forward, looking at the boy as if he wanted to say, 'excepting, of course, the one you want to go to,' — "is one based on —"



Note:

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It takes all kinds of people to make a bar — and you'll find them at Gavagan's. This is due in part to the personality and skill of Mr. Cohan (emphasis on the last syllable, please!), a man with few peers among the noble clan of bartenders. It is also due to the fact that, as we remarked once before, things just happen there! For example, you might be plagued with mice, meet up with a magician drinking vin sable at Gavagan's, and said magician might offer to provide you with a better mousetrap. But, as Messrs. de Camp and Pratt record, there would be a catch to it. These sage chroniclers (apparently by personal appointment to Mr. Cohan himself) of previous disorders in Gavagan's, prove once again it's wiser to just stick to your drinking. So bring your glass down to this end of the bar and meet your old friends, Mr. Cohan, Mr. Gross, Mr. Witherwax . . . and a very unlucky young man named Murdoch.

The Better Mousetrap

by L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP
& FLETCHER PRATT

THE TAXIDERMIST had imparted a drunken wink to the stuffed owl over the bar. Mr. Witherwax returned the wink and kept his gaze fixed resolutely aloft, well aware that if he lowered it, Mr. Gross would burst into anecdote. Considering the quality of the anecdotes, this was something to be avoided at any cost; but there must come the moment when the glass was empty, and Mr. Witherwax must look down to have it refilled. Beside him Mr. Gross cleared his throat ominously. Mr. Witherwax deliberately turned his back to the sound, looked along the mahogany terrain toward the door, and beckoned to the bartender.

"Who's that, drinking by himself down there?" he asked. "Maybe he'd like to join us; a man shouldn't be a solitary drinker. You can leave the cherry out of mine this time, Mr. Cohan."

"Co-han, by God!" the bartender corrected. "Him? His name is Murdoch, or maybe it's Mud, and I'm thinking he's not a lucky man for you to

know. He may be having murder done on him. . . . What'll you be having, Mr. Gross?"

"The usual — a boilermaker. That reminds me, I knew a man once —"

"What is he, a gangster?" said Mr. Witherwax. "I don't want to get mixed up in nothing, only do him a favor. Bring him down here and give him a drink on me. Tell him the Devil died on Tuesday night, and we're holding the wake."

Mr. Cohan smiled a smile of sly superiority through his folds of fat as he set out the ingredients of the boilermaker. "No, he would not be a gangster. It's worse even than that. He lost his dragon."

"A friend of my uncle Pincus was kicked in the belly by a kangaroo once," said Mr. Gross. "He —"

"I don't care whether he lost a dragon or found a mermaid," said Mr. Witherwax, desperately. "Bring him down here and give him a drink."

The bartender, with the shrug of a man who has done his duty and will not be responsible for the consequences, stepped to the end of the bar. As he spoke to Murdoch, the latter turned a thin and melancholy face toward the first comers, then nodded. There was no trace of previous potations in his gait, but he would have a double zombie, thanks. As he lifted his glass in salute, Mr. Gross gazed at him with fatherly interest.

"Is it true," he asked, "that you lost your dragon?"

Murdoch choked on the last mouthful, set down his glass and looked at Mr. Gross with pain. "If it was only my dragon I wouldn't care," he said, "but it was borrowed."

"That's right, and I misspoke meself," said Mr. Cohan, heartily. "I remember it was right here at this bar that you loaned it off that magician felly, and him drinking his own special drink."

Murdoch reached for another swallow. He drizzled some of it on his chin as the door opened, then gave a sigh of relief at the sight of a stranger.

Witherwax returned his gaze to the drunken owl, which stared back glassily. "I haven't never seen a dragon, and I don't expect to," he said. "Didn't St. George or somebody get rid of the last one?"

"He did not," said Mr. Cohan, having supplied the new arrival with beer. "This here, now, animal we're talking about I seen it with my own eyes, and it was as dragon as could be, and it belonged to that magician felly Abaris."

"Still does," said Murdoch in a rueful tone. "That is — well, I don't know why I let myself get mixed up — I didn't *like* him — oh, what the hell!" He took a long pull at his double zombie.

Witherwax turned his gaze to Mr. Cohan. "Who is this chap that owns a dragon? One of them scientists?"

"A magician I'm telling you," said the bartender. "He gave me his card once; maybe I got it here. Theophrastus V. Abaris (he lined the syllables out slowly); you would have seen him yourself, Mr. Gross, he used to come in on Thursday nights when you did. A big, greasy tub of lard, not honest fat from the wife's cooking like myself. Pale as a corp' he was, with his hair hanging down over his coat-collar and a little squeaky voice like a choir-boy. It's not easy you could miss him if you seen him once.

One of them real solitary drinkers he was, (Cohan continued) that never buy one for the bartender nor get one on the house, neither. Not that he wasn't friendly; he could and would talk down a Phillydelphia lawyer, only you couldn't understand half of what he said. I ast him once what he done for a living, and all he said was something that sounded like some kind of religion — I misremember the name. ("Pythagorean," said Murdoch, gloomily, and took another drink.) That would be it, and thanks, Mr. Murdoch. I never heard of it before, but I ast my brother Julius that's on the force about it, and he said it didn't look good, but there's no law against it as long as they don't tell fortunes. It has something to do with books. There's some of them old books that are worth all kinds of money.

That's what he went away for, he said, since the last time I seen him, to get some book, he said, a book by somebody named Nebulous or something like that. ("Zebulon," said Murdoch.) You should of heard him talk about it. He says it's hundreds of years he's been after the book, which is always the way he talks, so that when you can understand what he's saying, you can't believe a word of it. It seems he had the book once; he says he found it on an island in the pink Arabian Sea, just as though I didn't know sea-water ain't pink.

Then he says the Holy Saint Peter stole the book off him, and besides being a lot of Malarkey, he shouldn't be putting his tongue to the names of the holy saints that way, and I told him so. But now he's going to get it back, he says, because there's going to be a convention of fellies in the same line of business over in Brooklyn, I think he said. ("Brocken," corrected

Murdoch.) Okay, in Brocken. I remember on account of the date being the first of May, and I thought maybe it was some gang of Commies or something like that, but my brother Julius, that's on the force, says no.

Still and all it's good for business having him in here once in a while, with the tricks he plays, moving his fingers all the time like he's playing a piano that ain't there. Did I ever show you the bottle of private stock he drinks out of, Mr. Gross?

(Cohan ducked down to produce it. "*Vin sable*," read Witherwax from the label. "I know what that means; that's French, and it means 'sand wine.' Have something yourself on this round, will you Mr. Cohan?")

Don't mind if I do; the first today but not the last, and thank you. Well, I guess they must use black sand with it or something, because you can see for yourself how dark it is, like it was mixed with ink. Gavagan gets it for him from Costello's, the importer. No, I wouldn't be selling you a drink of it, Mr. Gross; it would be as much as my job was worth. This here Abaris is that particular, and he is a man I wouldn't want to have take a dislike to me, because of the funny things he can do.

(A sound vaguely imitating a rusty hinge emanated from Murdoch.)

Why you wouldn't believe it yourself sometimes, and I wouldn't either, only I seen them with my own two eyes. You know Mr. Jeffers, don't you, Mr. Witherwax? Well, it's a different man he is today than he was, and all because of this Abaris. A fine young man and a fine young felly he always was, except that in the old days, before you began coming in here, Mr. Witherwax, he maybe had too much money and spent too much of it on girls. Take them alone, either one; the money without the women, or a good girl without the money that can be a help to a young felly, and he's fixed for life. But put them together, and often as not, the young felly goes on the booze.

No, you needn't laugh, Mr. Gross. I'm not the man to say anything against good liquor, but I wouldn't want anyone to walk out this door that couldn't go on home on his own two feet. Good liquor helps a man to see that after all it's a small thing that disturbs him, but when you take liquor without the trouble, then the liquor becomes the trouble itself, and that's bad.

This was the way it used to be with Mr. Jeffers. He got to taking the liquor with the women, and then without them, and he could be a nasty drunk, too. When I would try to hold him back, he'd go around the corner there to

that Italian place where they don't care what they sell you, and get himself a skinful. Many's the time my brother Julius had to take him home, blind drunk. This evening I'm telling you about Mr. Jeffers was in here, and so was this Abaris — he used to call himself Dr. Abaris, did I tell you? But when I ast him could he take a wart off her finger for the wife, he said no, so I'll not be giving him the name.

So I said to Abaris, was there any trick he could do to make Mr. Jeffers stop drinking, like maybe the time he borrowed a bottle and poured three different things out of it. So he says: "Yes, my dear Cohan; of course, my dear Cohan. Fill up his glass," in that nancy voice of his, and he begins to make those motions like playing the piano.

I filled up Mr. Jeffers' glass with brandy like he ordered and he puts his hand to it, but before he can get the glass to his lips, the brandy is back in the bottle, by God. So after we tried it three times, Mr. Jeffers lets the glass alone, and a funny look comes over his face and he walks out. I thought maybe at the time he was headed for the Italian place again, but he comes back the next night, and you can call me an Orangeman if the same thing don't happen with the first drink Mr. Jeffers orders, while he is cold sober. I don't know how it would be if he come in tonight, but Mr. Jeffers hasn't touched a drop of anything stronger than beer since the day, and you all know it as well as I do. Abaris himself says the trick is simple; its nothing but a continuing appropriation, he says. ("Apportation," said Murdoch.)

I thank you, Mr. Murdoch. Excuse it, I must see what this gentleman will be having.

"A cousin of mine in Milwaukee once —" began Gross, but Witherwax hastily addressed Murdoch: "What's this business about a dragon? Did he make you think you'd seen one coming out of your drink?"

The young man sipped his zombie.

No, nothing like that, (he said reflectively). In fact, I thought it was all part of a stock joke, you know, like kidding someone over his luck with the dice or his long ears. I've seen plenty of magicians, like everybody else, at clubs and on the stage, and this Abaris didn't strike me as a particularly prepossessing specimen. In fact, I used to wonder how he made a go of it, because just as Mr. Cohan says, he looked rather greasy and was never well dressed. People like to be fooled, but they want to have it done in the grand manner, by a man with a waxed moustache, wearing a white tie and tails.

So I was just joking myself when I asked him if he were really a magician. (Murdoch shuddered slightly and took another sip.) He has black eyes, with pupils that have a kind of vertical look that I can't describe; he looked at me out of them and said yes, he was, did I have any objections, and from the way he said it, I knew right off that I'd made a mistake. But there didn't seem anything to do but pretend that I hadn't noticed, so I laughed and said he was just the man I wanted; I needed a magician or a Pied Piper at least, to get the mice out of my apartment.

(Witherwax laid a bill on the counter and made a circular motion over the glasses; Mr. Cohan bent to the task of making refills.)

I have an apartment on Fifth Street (continued Murdoch) on the third floor over one of those Fairfield restaurants. The only thing wrong with it is that it is — or was — simply overrun with mice. I had to keep all my food in metal or glass containers; they chewed the bindings of my books — really an affliction. You haven't any idea of what pests they can be when they get out of hand.

Now, wait a minute. (He held up a hand toward Witherwax, whose attitude indicated speech.) I know what you're going to say. You're going to ask why I didn't get an exterminator or a cat. Well, I live alone and do a good deal of traveling, so it would be no use trying to keep a cat. As for the exterminator, I did get one; I got half a dozen, in relays. They came around once a week with traps and mouse-seed which they scattered over the floor until it crunched underfoot, and I suppose they did kill a lot of mice. At least the place smelt like it. But the mice kept coming back.

The trouble was that Fairfield restaurant; it was a regular breeding-ground for them. You know the chain is owned by an old girl named Conybeare — Miss Gwen Conybeare. Like a good many other maiden ladies who have all the money they need and more time than they know what to do with, she fell for one of those Indian sects. You know, with meetings in dimly-lighted rooms and a prophet with a towel around his head. I suppose it's her business how she wants to spend her time and money, but this particular religion had a feature that made it my business, too. Her teacher convinced her that it was wrong to take life — not human life, but life of any kind, just as in India, where a man will get rid of a louse by picking it off himself and putting it on someone else.

She gave absolute orders that no death was to occur in a Fairfield res-

taurant, and wouldn't allow an exterminator on the premises. So you see that as fast as I got rid of the mice in my apartment, a new supply came up from below, and I had a real problem.

This Abaris person naturally couldn't know that. When I said I needed a magician to get the mice out of my place, he looked at me with those vertical-appearing pupils and made a kind of noise in his throat that I swear gave me the shivers all through. (Murdoch shivered again and gulped from his zombie.) I felt as though he were going to hypnotize me, or make my drink jump back into the bottle, like Jeffers', and so before anything like that could happen, I began to explain that it wasn't a joke. As soon as I got to the part about Miss Conybeare, he smiled all across his face.

"My dear young man," he said, "if it is a matter of a psychosoplist, I should ask nothing better than the opportunity to assist you. They are the most repulsive of existing beings. Let me see — ha, I will provide you with the king of all the cats, and mouse corpses will litter the doorstep of Fairfield's."

I explained that the king of the cats wouldn't do me much more good than the crown prince, because of my traveling.

He put a hand up to his mouth and spoke from underneath it. "Hm, hm," he said. "That makes it more difficult, but the project is a worthy one and I will not willingly abandon it. I will lend you my dragon."

I laughed, thinking that Abaris was a much cleverer man than he looked, to have turned a mild joke around on me in that fashion. But he didn't laugh back.

"It is a very young dragon," he said, "hatched from an egg presented to me by my old friend, Mr. Sylvester. As nearly as I can determine, I am the first person to raise one from the egg, so I must ask you to take particularly good care of it, as I wish to present a report at the next meeting of the Imperial Society."

I thought he was carrying the joke so far that it strained a bit, so I said of course I would take the best of care of his dragon, and if it wearied of a diet of mice, I'd be glad to see that it was provided with a beautiful young maiden tied to a tree, though I wouldn't guarantee the results, which I understood to be usually unfortunate for dragons in such cases.

He gave a giggle at that, but it trailed off in a nasty kind of way and he tapped his fingers two or three times on the bar. "It appears that you treat

this with a spirit of levity," he said. "These are high matters. Therefore, and purely as a preventative, I shall accompany the loan of the dragon with an engagement. I shall require you to permit me to put a curse on you when I return from the Brocken if my dragon is not returned in good order." He produced a knife with a sharp scalpel blade. "Prick your thumb," he said.

Well, things had gone too far for me to pull out at this point without being ridiculous, and besides I was curious about what kind of charlatanry he was going to produce by way of a dragon, so I stuck myself in the thumb and a drop of blood came out on the bar. Abaris leaned over it and made a little sort of humming song, all in minors, twiddling his fingers in the way Mr. Cohan described. The drop of blood vanished.

(Mr. Cohan had been leaning against the back of the bar with his arms akimbo. Now he came to life. "Vanished, did it?" he said. "The devil of a time I had trying to get the mark of that drop of blood out, and the best part of it's there yet. If you get the right angle and look close now — see — there it is, like it worked right through the varnish into the wood. Isn't that queer, now?")

There was nothing queer about the dragon, though (said Murdoch, and for the first time Witherwax noticed that the zombies were beginning to have some effect on his speech). It was a real dragon, I knew it was as soon as Abaris brought it to my place in a metal box, and that was when I really began to worry a little. It hooked its feef — I mean, it cooked its food on the hoof. Wouldn't touch a dead mouse at all, not at all. But when it got near a live one it would go *whoof* and shoot out a flame, and there was mouse, all cooked.

(Witherwax said: "I never thought of that. They must have the flame for something, though. That is, if it was a real dragon.")

(Murdoch stuck out a finger. "Look here, ol' man, don't you believe me?")

"Now, now," Mr. Cohan intervened heavily. "There will be no arguments of the kind in Gavagan's Bar. Mr. Murdoch, I am surprised at you. Not a word has Mr. Witherwax said to show he doesn't believe you. And as for the dragon I seen it with my own two eyes, right here on this bar.

He brought it in here in a big tomato-juice can (the bartender went on), to show it to me, because it was here he heard about it first, and because of the wonderful way it would be cleaning the mice out of his place, so there was hardly a one left. I will say it wasn't much to look at, being like one of

them alligators about a foot and a half long, with a couple of little stubby wings sticking out of its back.

Maybe it didn't like being out on the bar or something, because before Mr. Murdoch could get it back into the can, it run down to the end there, and there was a felly sitting drinking a Tom Collins and minding his own business. This dragon let off a puff of flame about a foot long that burned all the hair off the back of the felly's hand, and would you believe it? It boiled the Tom Collins right over the side of the glass so it made a mark on Gava-gan's varnish. This felly jumped up and run out of here, and as that sort of thing is bad for business, I told Mr. Murdoch he'd have to keep the dragon out of the place, and that was the beginning of all his troubles.

Now, Mr. Murdoch, it's all right. I was just going to tell them that the reason you brung the dragon in here was thinking it would maybe help with the rats we have in the cellar, bad luck to them, and also because it was getting hungry. The mice were clean eaten out, and Mr. Murdoch had no luck at all when he brought it home a piece of beefsteak or a pork chop, for beef or pork it would not have, but must catch its food for itself. The dragon was getting thin, he used to say, and would be saying something like "Kwark, kwark," and even trying to catch flies, that was so burned to pieces with the flame that it had nothing to eat from them at all.

So what does Mr. Murdoch do? He does what any man of good sense would do, and tries to take it to the zoo until Mr. Abaris gets home from Brooklyn or wherever it is. He puts it in the tomato-juice can with a cardboard top, but the dragon did not like the trip here to the bar at all, and it burns a hole in the cardboard, and out it comes. Then he puts it in a wooden box and the same thing happens, only it nearly burned up the apartment that time. Then he tries to call the zoo to come get it, but devil a bit would the zoo have to do with that.

("Why not?" asked Witherwax. "Oh, it's a long story, a long, long story," said Murdoch. "They said they couldn't take it unless I gave it to them, and I said I couldn't do that, and they said I should take it to a pet stop — I mean, pet shop, and I told them it burned a hole in the box. That was bad, because the zoo, it said, what did it say? It said, oh yes, they'd send a wagon right around for the dragon, in charge of a keeper named Napoleon Bonaparte. So I hung up. Maybe the whole thing didn't happen.")

It happened as I'm the living witness (said Mr. Cohan stoutly). When

Mr. Murdoch gave me the word on this, I says to him, if you can't take the dragon to his food, then do the next best thing. Doc Brenner now, he tells me there's places where you can buy rats and mice and things like that for experiments, and if this isn't an experiment, what is it? So when I got the address of one of those places from Doc Brenner, Mr. Murdoch goes there right away, and then he remembers he has ordered some wood to make bookshelves out of. So what does he do but leave the key to his place downstairs in the restaurant.

Well, this boy that brought the boards in — he was in here afterwards, and young as he was, I wouldn't refuse him a drink, because he was needing it — this lad put the boards down, when all of a sudden a mouse runs out of the corner by the pipes, with the dragon after it. It must of been a new mouse. The dragon was not stalking like a cat, the way it usually did, but hopping across the floor, with its claws scratching the boards and its wings trying to fly, and every third hop it would let out a flame a foot long.

The mouse made a dive for that pile of lumber, with the dragon after him. The lad that brought the boards was hit by a tongue of flame — he had a hole in his pants-leg you could shove your fist through — before he got out of there, thinking maybe Gavagan's would be a better place for him. What happened next I cannot tell you, but the nearest a man can come to it, the mouse crawled in among them boards and the dragon set them afire while trying to cook the mouse.

However that may be, when Mr. Murdoch got back with a box under his arm and live mice in it, his apartment was in a fine grand blaze, and fireman spraying water through the window and chopping things up with their axes and having themselves a rare old time. That part was all right, because Mr. Murdoch had insurance. But there was no insurance on the dragon, and when he got in afterward, by God, not a trace of the beast could he find. Whether it got burned up, or flushed down with the hoses or run away to the Fairfield Restaurant, he has no idea at all. And now here's this Abaris coming back from Brooklyn and Mr. Murdoch with no dragon for him, nothing but the box of mice he has been keeping, hoping the dragon would show up.

So now this Abaris will put the curse on him, and what it will be I don't know and neither does he. No, Mr. Murdoch, you will excuse me from giving you another double zombie this night.

We've mentioned before, but cannot stress too often, the growing importance of women as writers both of science fiction and of pure fantasy; the best of them, from such old hands as Moore to such recent discoveries as Merrill and Curtis, bring to the field a welcome warmth and sensitivity, a striking immediacy of impact, a realization that every type of fiction must essentially deal with people . . . in short, with you. We're happy, therefore, to bring you the first of a group of distinguished stories by a new name in the profession: a delicate story of mood and emotion that will stay in your mind (and heart) long after you have forgotten the most sensational transgalactic epics.

The Listening Child

by IDRIS SEABRIGHT

IT WAS NOT until after his first bad heart attack that Edwin Hoppler really noticed the child. He had long ago decided on the basis of his contacts with his married sister's strident brood that he didn't like children. But the doctor, after telling him roundly that he was lucky to be alive, had ordered at least a month's rest in bed. Somebody had to bring the trays up from the boarding house dining room. Timmy was usually the one.

Timmy's grandmother dressed him in smocks and little breeches she cut out of discarded housedresses, and this costume, together with his long black cotton stockings and home-trimmed hair, gave him an odd resemblance to the kindergarten pupils of thirty years ago. After he had successfully negotiated the hazards of knocking, opening the door, and putting the tray down, he would linger, smiling shyly, until Hoppler began to eat. Hoppler always spoke to him, but Timmy never answered. One day Hoppler mentioned it to Mrs. Dean when she was straightening up his room.

"Oh, didn't you know?" she said, putting down her dust cloth and turning. "I thought I'd told you. Why, the poor little fellow had scarlet fever when he was a year old, just after his mother died. He's deaf. He can't hear a thing.

"He goes to the deaf school, but he hasn't learned to lip-read yet. The teacher says it's hard to teach them, when they can't hear at all. And of course he can't talk."

"That's too bad," Hoppler said with an effort. He had the invalid's dislike for hearing about other people's troubles. "Are you sure he's entirely deaf, though? I thought I'd noticed him listening to things."

Mrs. Dean shook her head. "You mean that way he has of putting his head on one side and listening to something you can't hear yourself? That doesn't mean anything. I asked the doctor at the clinic about it, and he said Timmy couldn't possibly be hearing anything. It gives you the creeps to watch him, though, doesn't it? I used to get the shivers every time, until I got used to it. But he's just like his ears were filled with concrete, he's that deaf. Poor little thing."

The next time Timmy brought up a tray, Hoppler motioned him over to the bed and folded a paper boat for him. Timmy hung back, smiling shyly. At last he almost snatched the paper and ran out of the room with it. And after that he stayed longer when he brought the tray, and his smiles grew less shy.

Once in a while Edwin caught him "listening." He would cock his head to one side and hearken, while his eyes grew bright. Edwin did not find it as disconcerting as Mrs. Dean had pictured it. It was not until the day before Timmy's seventh birthday that it actually bothered him.

The day was sunny and fairly warm. Children were playing outside in the street, and Edwin's open window let in plenty of noise. When Timmy first began to "listen," tipping his head farther than usual, attentive and concentrated, the pantomime was so vivid that Hoppler was sure some of the sound from outside must have got through to the boy's dulled nerves. A dog was barking, children called to each other, somebody was trying to start a car. Timmy must have heard some of it.

The boy relaxed. His attention came back to the picture Edwin was drawing for him. Seconds later there came a burst of shrill, agonized yelping that ended abruptly on a high note. There was a babble of children's excited voices, fright growing in them. Windows went up. And then, cutting across the confusion, a little girl's shriek, "He's dead! Oooh, oooh, that car ran over him. Blackie's dead!"

Hoppler put down his pencil and looked at Timmy's face. The boy's

gray eyes were fixed intently — there was always something bird-like and intense about him — on the drawing. Now he looked up at Edwin and smiled rather uncertainly.

It was a normal response. Timmy plainly hadn't heard the commotion in the street and couldn't imagine what his friend was stopping for. But Edwin pleated his lower lip with his fingers and frowned. Timmy hadn't heard the dog's yelps, the cries, when they occurred. Had he, somehow, heard them ahead of time? It was beyond belief. But it had looked like that.

Hoppler finished the picture — two children wading in a scratchy brook — and gave it to Timmy. Timmy folded it up carefully, making the chuckling sound that with him indicated pleasure. He started toward the door and then came back to run one finger lightly over the back of Edwin's hand. It was one of the mannerisms, half engaging, half pathetic, which made Hoppler fond of him. This time he found himself wincing a little from the touch. When Timmy had gone out, Hoppler pressed his hands nervously to his chest.

It was nearly a month later that Timmy "listened" again. Hoppler was sitting up in an armchair and Timmy, lying on the floor, was drawing a panoramic street scene on a large piece of butcher paper he had brought up from the kitchen. He was drawing with great verve, making out-sized pedestrians and dogs and small, very bustle-backed automobiles. Now and then he frowned as his pencil went through the paper to the soft carpet beneath. The boarding house was quiet except for a distant clatter from the kitchen where the pans and dishes from supper were being washed up.

Timmy got to his feet. He looked sharply at Hoppler for a moment and then fixed his eyes on a spot four or five feet above his head. His lips parted. His head tipped. His eyes grew wide.

Hoppler watched him uneasily. He had almost forgotten his speculation when the dog had been killed — it was the kind of idea a sensible person will try to dismiss — but now it recurred to him. Was something going to happen? What foolishness! But was Timmy, somehow, listening to the elsewise inaudible footsteps of disaster drawing near?

Gradually the tension ebbed away from Timmy's face. He drew a deep breath. He tossed the pale brown hair back out of his eyes. He squatted down on the floor again and picked up his pencil. On a still-empty portion of the paper he began to draw some birds. He had just started the wings of

the third one when the familiar, agonizing pressure began in Hoppler's chest.

The attack was going to be a bad one, Edwin saw. He felt the familiar fright at the way breath was being remorselessly crushed out of him.

He groped wildly after the bottle of amyl nitrate pearls that sat on the little stand beside his chair, and upset it. Pain flooded through his chest and ran out terrifyingly along his left arm. He couldn't stand it. His chest was turning to a brittle box which they — the forces that tormented his elderly body so wantonly — were splintering inward with the reverberating turns of a fiery vise. With his last strength he tried to cry out, to get help. He was going to die.

When Hoppler came to himself again, he was lying flat in bed with a hot water bottle over his heart. The doctor, looking very serious, was folding up his stethoscope. Mrs. Dean, pale and distracted, hovered in the background.

"That was a near thing, young fellow," Dr. Simms said severely when he saw Edwin's eyes fixed on him. "If I'd got Mrs. Dean's call five minutes later — well! Have you been putting any strain on yourself?"

Hoppler searched his memory. From the knowledge he had painfully acquired of his disease, he didn't honestly think his momentary uneasiness at Timmy's "listening" could be classed as strain. And he had been getting up a good deal lately. Today he'd been sitting up almost the whole day.

"You'll have to learn to take this seriously," Dr. Simms said when he had finished his confession. "Angina's no picnic. I should think your first attack would have taught you that. But there's no use crying over spilt milk. I want you to go back to bed for at least a week, and then I'm going to try a new treatment on you. The clinical report on it is encouraging. You mustn't worry. Keep in a pleasant frame of mind."

He went out. There was an inaudible colloquy in the hall between him and Mrs. Dean. The landlady came back and began tidying up the disordered room. Hoppler watched her quick movements with a touch of jealousy. She was older than he, and she was on the go all day long. Heart trouble? She didn't know she had a heart. Simms had told him once that angina preferred its victims male.

She felt the water bottle for warmth and drew the cover up more snugly about his neck. "You know, Mr. Hoppler," she said impressively, "Timmy saved your life. He really did. He came running down the stairs while I was

putting the silver away, and began pulling at my arm. I tried to shake him off — you know how children are — but he held on and jabbered away at me until I realized something was wrong. You were all slumped over in your chair, fainted, when I found you. Of course I called the doctor then. But you heard what he said about five minutes more."

Edwin Hoppler nodded. "Timmy's a good boy, a very good boy," he said faintly. He wished Mrs. Dean would finish and go. He wanted to rest.

Timmy poked his head around the door jamb. He was pale and subdued. His eyes were so large they seemed to have eaten up his face. As he caught sight of his friend he smiled uncertainly, but his expression slipped back quickly into anxiousness.

Hoppler looked away from him and then up at the ceiling. He was grateful to Timmy, he was fond of him, but he didn't want to see him now. In a sense, he didn't want ever to see him again. The child — why make any bones about it? — frightened him. Timmy himself was quiet, touching, innocent. The dark faculty for which he appeared to be the vehicle, which he embodied, was otherwise. It was impossible to think of Timmy's "listening" without a flutter of uneasiness. And the doctor had told him to keep in a pleasant frame of mind. Perhaps he ought to ask Mrs. Dean to keep the boy out of his room, at least for a while. Hoppler licked his bluish lips.

But was that sensible? Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Timmy actually was able, in some super-normal way, to hear the approach of . . . of death (Edwin thought grimly). Wouldn't the sensible thing be to keep Timmy with him as much as possible? If he had realized that Timmy's uncanny listening this evening portended a heart attack, he could have had the amyl nitrate pearls in readiness for the first pangs. The attack need not have been serious. And he was fond of the boy.

Hoppler looked toward the door where Timmy was still patiently standing. He raised one hand and beckoned to him. When the child was within reach he gave the grimy little hand a squeeze.

Dr. Simms's new treatment did Hoppler a great deal of good. He put on weight, rapidly at first and then more slowly, until he had gained eighteen pounds. Mrs. Dean told him he looked ten years younger.

Dr. Simms explained carefully that, though he was more than pleased with the progress his patient was making, the treatment itself was rather

in the nature of a palliative. Physicians weren't sure yet how much of its effect was permanent. Hopper listened without being much impressed. He was able to be up all day now and even, as the weather improved, to get outside.

There was no question, of course, of his going back to his work as an accountant. The firm had pensioned him off, not too illiberally, after his first attack. As Mrs. Dean said, he had nothing to do now but enjoy himself.

Enjoying oneself, at sixty-three, is apt to prove a quiet business. Hopper began to spend most of the daylight hours in the pocket-sized neighborhood park, reading the paper, watching the graceful evolutions of the sea gulls or listening to their raucous, undignified squawking.

Timmy, meantime — he was almost constantly with Hopper after school hours — bounced a rubber ball, drew pictures, or rather half-heartedly climbed on the rails or swung from the rungs of the playground equipment. He had grown so much in the last few months that even Mrs. Dean had been forced to see the unsuitability of dressing him any longer in home-made clothes. She had bought him jeans and little checked flannel cotton shirts. In this costume he looked quite modish and contemporary. He lost, at least obviously, most of the wispiness, the pathos, which Hopper had found in him at first. But it gave Hopper a strange numbed feeling to see how formidable a barrier his deafness was between him and the other children who played in the park. Timmy was a sociable child, but the others greeted him with stares and then uneasily drew away from him. The boy was always glad to return from his excursions among the swings and trapezes to his grown-up friend.

When noon came Hopper would write a note and send Timmy with it and money to a restaurant in the neighborhood to buy sandwiches and milk. Watching the boy's quick intelligence, his constant unselfconscious attempts to make bricks without straw, Hopper began to feel that he was failing in his moral obligation to him.

Mrs. Dean was certainly fond of her grandson, but she was too occupied with the constant petty demands of the boarding house, too harassed, to pay much attention to him. Perhaps Timmy ought to have a private teacher. He hadn't learned to lip-read yet with any facility. Private instruction might help him to faster progress. Hopper must talk to Timmy's teacher at the deaf school and find out what was possible for him.

The boy's disturbing "listening," except for one notable exception, had ceased. The exception had occurred when Timmy had "listened," vividly and disconcertingly, just before one of the older boys had fallen headlong from the slippery top piece of one of the swings to which he had illegitimately climbed. The fall itself would not have been serious. But the boy had hit his head as he fell on the wooden seat of one of the swings. He had been knocked unconscious, there had been a great deal of blood, an ambulance had been called.

But the unpleasant incident fixed even more firmly in Hoppler the conviction that Timmy was a reliable barometer. He was rather ashamed of the relief he found in his confidence in the boy's uncanny ability. During these quiet months — the happiest, after all, of Hoppler's life — Dr. Simms examined him at two-week intervals. He expressed himself as gratified with Hoppler's progress, but he always warned him to go slow, to take things easily, to be careful. Hoppler listened to these counsels seriously, but with a certain inner complacency. He had channels of information which weren't open to Simms.

One fine warm day late in summer he decided to take Timmy to the beach. He contemplated getting Simms's permission — the expedition would involve streetcars, transferring, a good deal of exertion in one way or another — and then decided against it. Simms might after all tell him not to go, and Hoppler had been feeling unusually well. Timmy had never seen the ocean, never been to the beach. It was a part of his education which ought to be attended to.

They reached the amusement pike, at the end of the car line, just at noon. Edwin bought hot dogs for Timmy and a hamburger for himself from one of the stands. Timmy bit into his bun a little doubtfully; Hoppler thought it must be the first time he had eaten one. His hesitation soon vanished. He ate three hot dogs and finished off with an Eskimo pie. Hoppler, meantime, indulged himself in a glass of beer.

After lunch they rode on the merry-go-round. Edwin wondered rather sadly what blurred effect the amusement was making on Timmy, locked within the confines of his perpetually silent world. A merry-go-round without the music! But Timmy plainly found his spotted wooden mount enchanting and loved the motion it had. When he had at last tired of riding, Edwin took him to a penny arcade. After that they explored novelty and

curio shops, and Edwin bought Timmy a ring with a blistered pinkish abalone pearl. Late in the afternoon they went down to the beach itself.

Though the day itself was warm the water, as usual, was cold. There were few bathers in. In any case, Timmy hadn't brought a bathing suit. He had none to bring. But he sat down on the sand and took off his shoes and stockings. He rolled his trouser legs up as far as they would go and then waded bravely into the surf. The cold water made him gasp and wince and laugh.

After his first awkwardness disappeared, he was like a dog let off the leash. He found a brown length of seaweed far down the beach and dragged it back to show Edwin how the fleshy bladders could be made to pop. He collected a handful of seashells and bestowed them on Edwin too. He raced along the sand like a high-spirited pony. Now and then he would squat down on the very edge of the surf and heap up a mound of wet sand for the waves to level again. It was clear that though Timmy had enjoyed everything, he liked the beach itself most of all. He loved the beach.

Hoppler watched him smilingly. He was conscious of an uncommon felicity. This was what people meant when they spoke of the pleasure of giving. Like so many of the great platitudes of humanity, it was quite true. Watching Timmy playing, running along the sand, Edwin was more than happy, he was himself young again.

But it was time to be going home. A wind was coming up, the sun had gone under a cloud. The air had turned cold. The beach was deserted. Soon it would be dark. It was time to go home.

He motioned to Timmy, far down the beach, to come back to him. The boy turned and started to obey. Suddenly he halted. He was "listening."

Even at that distance Edwin could catch his unusual intensity. Never had the boy hearkened as he was doing now. He seemed to be pierced through, transfixed, by his perception. And Hoppler caught vividly, too, a strange new expression on the boy's face. Usually Timmy's face, when he "listened," showed nothing except interest. Now interest had been replaced by an indrawn recognition. And Timmy was afraid. His recognition was mixed with fear.

The exertion, Edwin thought, the walking, the long afternoon. The glass of beer might have been the decisive thing. Simms had certainly warned him. He thrust his hand into his pocket for his amyl nitrate pearls.

They weren't there. With desperate incredulity Hoppler remembered that he had meant to move the bottle and hadn't. It was in his other coat, at home, in the closet. In his other coat.

He felt angry and defeated and horribly afraid. What use was it for Timmy to have warned him if he didn't have the pearls? Already the pain was beginning. And this time there would be no escape. Timmy had heard disaster coming. This time Hoppler was going to die.

From far down the beach Timmy waved at him. The fluttering cadence of his hand against the darkening sky was like the motion of a bird. Edwin, amid the distraction of his pain, thought that he smiled. He waved once more. Then he turned. He began running out into the cold, lead-colored water as fast as he could, splashing through the white froth of little waves and then of bigger ones.

Hoppler watched blankly, uncomprehendingly. What was Timmy doing? Timmy shouldn't desert him now, when he needed him. "Timmy!" he called weakly, as if the boy could hear him. "Timmy!" And then, comprehension growing in him, wildly, "Timmy! Timmy! Come back!"

The water was up to the child's waist, to the middle of his narrow chest. Still he moved out. He rocked under the impetus of a wave. The small body was dwindling, turning to a spot against the darkly-glistening surface of the sea. And steadily it grew more remote. "Timmy!" Edwin Hoppler shrieked. "Timmy! Oh, God. . . ."

The child's hand went up for the last time, in salutation and farewell. For a moment his head seemed to bob about in the water. And then a wave like dark glass washed smoothly over it.

Hoppler's voice died away into the silence. He looked about him dazedly, as if he were waking from heavy sleep.

The pain had left his chest. He was well, he would have no attack. Perhaps he would never have an attack again. He stood alone in the dusk, a cold wind blowing around him. He would have no attack. Timmy, offering himself as a surrogate to death, had arranged it so. There was nothing to do now but wait until the waves washed the boy's body up on the beach.



Alfred E. van Vogt has become one of the acknowledged masters, first of the pulps and later of hard-cover science fiction, largely because of the sheer overwhelming vastness of his concepts, which casually embrace more universes than you can name planets. But a few heretics like us think that his strongest work has been his least all-embracing, that his astute mind has best displayed itself in the detailed convincing study of a limited situation, as in the classic early sections of SLAN (which is what converted one of us to science fiction!). Here is one of the finest vintage specimens of the van Vogtian creation and analysis of a fascinating and believable individual — even though the individual in this case happens to be an entire forest.

Process

by A. E. VAN VOGT

IN the bright light of that far sun, the forest breathed and had its being. It was aware of the ship that had come down through the thin mists of the upper air. But its automatic hostility to the alien thing was not immediately accompanied by alarm.

For tens of thousands of square miles, its roots entwined under the ground, and its millions of tree tops swayed gently in a thousand idle breezes. And beyond, spreading over the hills and the mountains, and along almost endless sea coast were other forests as strong and as powerful as itself.

From time immemorial the forest had guarded the land from a dimly understood danger. What that danger was it began now slowly to remember. It was from ships like this, that descended from the sky. The forest could not recall clearly how it had defended itself in the past, but it did remember tensely that defense had been necessary.

Even as it grew more and more aware of the ship coasting along in the gray-red sky above, its leaves whispered a timeless tale of battles fought and won. Thoughts flowed their slow course down the channels of vibration,

and the stately limbs of tens of thousands of trees trembled ever so slightly.

The vastness of that tremor, affecting as it did all the trees, gradually created a sound and a pressure. At first it was almost impalpable, like a breeze wafting through an evergreen glen. But it grew stronger.

It acquired substance. The sound became all-enveloping. And the whole forest stood there vibrating its hostility, waiting for the thing in the sky to come nearer.

It had not long to wait.

The ship swung down from its lane. Its speed, now that it was close to the ground, was greater than it had first seemed. And it was bigger. It loomed gigantic over the near trees, and swung down lower, careless of the tree tops. Brush crackled, limbs broke, and entire trees were brushed aside as if they were meaningless and weightless and without strength.

Down came the ship, cutting its own path through a forest that groaned and shrieked with its passage. It settled heavily into the ground two miles after it first touched a tree. Behind, the swath of broken trees quivered and pulsed in the light of the sun, a straight path of destruction which — the forest suddenly remembered — was exactly what had happened in the past.

It began to pull clear of the anguished parts. It drew out its juices, and ceased vibrating in the affected areas. Later, it would send new growth to replace what had been destroyed, but now it accepted the partial death it had suffered. It knew fear.

It was a fear tinged with anger. It felt the ship lying on crushed trees, on a part of itself that was not yet dead. It felt the coldness and the hardness of steel walls, and the fear and the anger increased.

A whisper of thought pulsed along the vibration channels. Wait, it said, there is a memory in me. A memory of long ago when other such ships as this came.

The memory refused to clarify. Tense but uncertain, the forest prepared to make its first attack. It began to grow around the ship.

Long ago it had discovered the power of growth that was possible to it. There was a time when it had not been as large as it was now. And then, one day, it became aware that it was coming near another forest like itself.

The two masses of growing wood, the two colossi of intertwined roots approached each other warily, slowly, in amazement, in a startled but cau-

tious wonder that a similar life form should actually have existed all this time. Approached, touched — and fought for years.

During that prolonged struggle nearly all growth in the central portions stopped. Trees ceased to develop new branches. The leaves, by necessity, grew hardier, and performed their functions for much longer periods. Roots developed slowly. The entire available strength of the forest was concentrated in the processes of defense and attack.

Walls of trees sprang up overnight. Enormous roots tunneled into the ground for miles straight down, breaking through rock and metal, building a barrier of living wood against the encroaching growth of the strange forest. On the surface, the barriers thickened to a mile or more of trees that stood almost bole to bole. And, on that basis, the great battle finally petered out. The forest accepted the obstacle created by its enemy.

Later, it fought to a similar standstill a second forest which attacked it from another direction.

The limits of demarcation became as natural as the great salt sea to the south, or the icy cold of mountain tops that were frozen the year round.

As it had in battle with the two other forests, *the* forest concentrated its entire strength against the encroaching ship. Trees shot up at the rate of a foot every few minutes. Creepers climbed the trees, and flung themselves over the top of the vessel. The countless strands of it raced over the metal, and then twined themselves around the trees on the far side. The roots of those trees dug deeper into the ground, and anchored in rock strata heavier than any ship ever built. The tree boles thickened, and the creepers widened till they were enormous cables.

As the light of that first day faded into twilight, the ship was buried under thousands of tons of wood, and hidden in foliage so thick that nothing of it was visible.

The time had come for the final destructive action.

Shortly after dark, tiny roots began to fumble over the underside of the ship. They were infinitesimally small; so small that in the initial stages they were no more than a few dozens of atoms in diameter; so small that the apparently solid metal seemed almost emptiness to them; so incredibly small that they penetrated the hard steel effortlessly.

It was at that time, almost as if it had been waiting for this stage, that the

ship took counteraction. The metal grew warm, then hot, and then cherry red. That was all that was needed. The tiny roots shriveled, and died. The larger roots near the metal burned slowly as the searing heat reached them.

Above the surface, other violence began. Flame darted from a hundred orifices of the ship's surface. First the creepers, then the trees began to burn. It was no flare-up of uncontrollable fire, no fierce conflagration leaping from tree to tree in irresistible fury. Long ago, the forest had learned to control fires started by lightning or spontaneous combustion. It was a matter of sending sap to the affected area. The greener the tree, the more sap that permeated it, then the hotter the fire would have to be.

The forest could not immediately remember ever having encountered a fire that could make inroads against a line of trees that oozed a sticky wetness from every crevice of their bark.

But this fire could. It was different. It was not only flame; it was energy. It did not feed off the wood; it was fed by an energy within itself.

That fact at last brought the associational memory to the forest. It was a sharp and unmistakable remembrance of what it had done long ago to rid itself and its planet of a ship just like this.

It began to withdraw from the vicinity of the ship. It abandoned the framework of wood and shrubbery with which it had sought to imprison the alien structure. As the precious sap was sucked back into trees that would now form a second line of defense, the flames grew brighter, and the fire waxed so brilliant that the whole scene was bathed in an eerie glow.

It was some time before the forest realized that the fire beams were no longer flaming out from the ship, and that what incandescence and smoke remained came from normally burning wood.

That, too, was according to its memory of what had happened — before.

Frantically though reluctantly the forest initiated what it now realized was the only method of ridding itself of the intruder. Frantically because it was hideously aware that the flame from the ship could destroy entire forests. And reluctantly because the method of defense involved its suffering the burns of energy only slightly less violent than those that had flared from the machine.

Tens of thousands of roots grew toward rock and soil formations that they had carefully avoided since the last ship had come. In spite of the need for

haste, the process itself was slow. Tiny roots, quivering with unpleasant anticipation, forced themselves into the remote, buried ore beds, and by an intricate process of osmosis drew grains of pure metal from the impure natural stuff. The grains were almost as small as the roots that had earlier penetrated the steel walls of the ship, small enough to be borne along, suspended in sap, through a maze of larger roots.

Soon there were thousands of grains moving along the channels, then millions. And, though each was tiny in itself, the soil where they were discharged soon sparkled in the light of the dying fire. As the sun of that world reared up over the horizon, the silvery gleam showed a hundred feet wide all around the ship.

It was shortly after noon that the machine showed awareness of what was happening. A dozen hatches opened, and objects floated out of them. They came down to the ground, and began to skim up the silvery stuff with nozzled things that sucked up the fine dust in a steady fashion. They worked with great caution; but an hour before darkness set in again, they had scooped up more than twelve tons of the thinly spread Uranium 235.

As night fell, all the two-legged things vanished inside the vessel. The hatches closed. The long torpedo-shape floated lightly upward, and sped to the higher heavens where the sun still shone.

The first awareness of the situation came to the forest as the roots deep under the ship reported a sudden lessening of pressure. It was several hours before it decided that the enemy had actually been driven off. And several more hours went by before it realized that the uranium dust still on the scene would have to be removed. The rays spread too far afield.

The accident that occurred then took place for a very simple reason. The forest had taken the radioactive substance out of rock. To get rid of it, it need merely put it back into the nearest rock beds, particularly the kind of rock that absorbed the radioactivity. To the forest the situation seemed as obvious as that.

An hour after it began to carry out the plan, the explosion mushroomed toward outer space.

It was vast beyond all the capacity of the forest to understand. It neither saw nor heard that colossal shape of death. What it did experience was enough. A hurricane leveled square miles of trees. The blast of heat and radiation started fires that took hours to put out.

Fear departed slowly, as it remembered that this too had happened before. Sharper by far than the memory was the vision of the possibilities of what had happened . . . the nature of the opportunity.

Shortly after dawn the following morning, it launched its attack. Its victim was the forest which — according to its faulty recollection — had originally invaded its territory.

Along the entire front which separated the two collossi, small atomic explosions erupted. The solid barrier of trees which was the other forest's outer defense went down before blast after blast of irresistible energy.

The enemy, reacting normally, brought up its reserve of sap. When it was fully committed to the gigantic task of growing a new barrier, the bombs started to go off again. The resulting explosions destroyed its main sap supply. And, since it did not understand what was happening, it was lost from that moment.

Into the no-man's-land where the bombs had gone off, the attacking forest rushed an endless supply of roots. Wherever resistance built up, there an atomic bomb went off. Shortly after the next noon, a titanic explosion destroyed the sensitive central trees — and the battle was over.

It took months for the forest to grow into the territory of its defeated enemy, to squeeze out the other's dying roots, to nudge over trees that now had no defense, and to put itself into full and unchallenged possession.

The moment the task was completed, it turned like a fury upon the forest on its other flank. Once more it attacked with atomic thunder, and with a hail of fire tried to overwhelm its opponent.

It was met by equal force. Exploding atoms!

For its knowledge had leaked across the barrier of intertwined roots which separated forests.

Almost, the two monsters destroyed each other. Each became a remnant, that started the painful process of regrowth. As the years passed, the memory of what had happened grew dim. Not that it mattered. Actually, the ships came at will. And somehow, even if the forest remembered, its atomic bombs would not go off in the presence of a ship.

The only thing that would drive away the ships was to surround each machine with a fine dust of radioactive stuff. Whereupon it would scoop up the material, and then hastily retreat.

Victory was always as simple as that.

Our friend Herman Mudgett, whose knowledge of fantasy is exceeded only by his knowledge of music, once called Fitz-James O'Brien the Franz Schubert of fantasy; a young writer who bubbled with ideas as Schubert bubbled with songs. Another, sadder comparison is the shortness of both men's lives. What other, even greater fantasy themes were lost to the world through the clumsiness of a Union doctor after Antietam? Surely, the whole body of Fitz-James O'Brien's fantasy fiction is one great unfinished symphony, the last movement of which would have been a final summing-up, a proper consummation of the thought and feeling of the great pioneer of American science fiction and fantasy. Yet, on many themes, there was little rounding out for O'Brien to do. The Wondersmith is a fine example of that completeness of his thinking; in it are expressed practically every phase of the idea of robots: the evil conception of the mechanical as slave, the use of the robot to war on unsuspecting mankind, the final turning of the android against its creator . . . almost the whole body of writing on robots is here in matrix in this story written nearly a hundred years ago!

The Wondersmith

by FITZ-JAMES O'BRIEN

I

GOLOSH STREET AND ITS PEOPLE

A SMALL LANE, the name of which I have forgotten, or do not choose to remember, slants suddenly off from Chatham Street (before that headlong thoroughfare rushes into the Park), and retreats suddenly down towards the East River, as if it were disgusted with the smell of old clothes, and had determined to wash itself clean. This excellent intention it has, however, evidently contributed towards the making of that imaginary pavement mentioned in the old adage; for it is still emphatically a dirty street. It has never been able to shake off the taint of filth which it inherits from the ancestral thoroughfare. It is slushy and greasy, as if it were twin brother of the Roman Ghetto.

I like a dirty slum; not because I am naturally unclean, but because I generally find a certain sediment of philosophy precipitated in its gutters. A clean street is terribly prosaic. There is no food for thought in carefully swept pavements, barren kennels, and vulgarly spotless houses. But when I go down a street which has been left so long to itself that it has acquired a distinct outward character, I find plenty to think about. The scraps of sodden letters lying in the ash-barrel have their meaning: desperate appeals, perhaps, from Tom, the baker's assistant, to Amelia, the daughter of the dry-goods retailer, who is always selling at a sacrifice in consequence of the late fire. That may be Tom himself who is now passing me in a white apron, and I look up at the windows of the house (which does not, however, give any signs of a recent conflagration) and almost hope to see Amelia wave a white pocket-handkerchief. The bit of orange-peel lying on the sidewalk inspires thought. Who will fall over it? who but the industrious mother of six children, the youngest of which is only nine months old, all of whom are dependent on her exertions for support? I see her slip and tumble. I see the pale face convulsed with agony, and the vain struggle to get up; the pitying crowd closing her off from all air; the anxious young doctor who happened to be passing by; the manipulation of the broken limb, the shake of the head, the moan of the victim, the litter borne on men's shoulders, the gates of the New York Hospital unclosing, the subscription taken up on the spot. There is some food for speculation in that three-year-old, tattered child, masked with dirt, who is throwing a brick at another three-year-old, tattered child, masked with dirt. It is not difficult to perceive that he is destined to lurk, as it were, through life. His bad, flat face — or, at least, what can be seen of it — does not look as if it were made for the light of day. The mire in which he wallows now is but a type of the moral mire in which he will wallow hereafter. The feeble little hand lifted at this instant to smite his companion, half in earnest, half in jest, will be raised against his fellow-beings forevermore.

Golosh Street — as I will call this nameless lane before alluded to — is an interesting locality. All the oddities of trade seemed to have found their way thither and made an eccentric mercantile settlement. There is a bird-shop at one corner wainscoted with little cages containing linnets, waxwings, canaries, blackbirds, Mino-birds, with a hundred other varieties, known only to naturalists. Immediately opposite is an establishment where they sell

nothing but ornaments made out of the tinted leaves of autumn, varnished and gummed into various forms. Further down is a second-hand book-stall, which looks like a sentry-box mangled out flat, and which is remarkable for not containing a complete set of any work. There is a small chink between two ordinary-sized houses, in which a little Frenchman makes and sells artificial eyes, specimens of which, ranged on a black velvet cushion, stare at you unwinkingly through the window as you pass, until you shudder and hurry on, thinking how awful the world would be if every one went about without eyelids. There are junk-shops in Golosh Street that seem to have got hold of all the old nails in the ark and all the old brass of Corinth. Madame Filomel, the fortune-teller, lives at No. 12 Golosh Street, second story front, pull the bell on the left-hand side. Next door to Madame is the shop of Herr Hippe, commonly called the Wondersmith.

Herr Hippe's shop is the largest in Golosh Street, and to all appearance is furnished with the smallest stock. Beyond a few packing-cases, a turner's lathe, and a shelf laden with dissected maps of Europe, the interior of the shop is entirely unfurnished. The window, which is lofty and wide, but much begrimed with dirt, contains the only pleasant object in the place. This is a beautiful little miniature theatre, — that is to say, the orchestra and stage. It is fitted with charmingly painted scenery and all the appliances for scenic changes. There are tiny traps, and delicately constructed "lifts," and real footlights fed with burning-fluid, and in the orchestra sits a diminutive conductor before his desk, surrounded by musical manikins, all provided with the smallest of violoncellos, flutes, oboes, drums, and such like. There are characters also on the stage. A Templar in a white cloak is dragging a fainting female form to the parapet of a ruined bridge, while behind a great black rock on the left one can see a man concealed, who, kneeling, levels an arquebus at the knight's heart. But the orchestra is silent; the conductor never beats the time, the musicians never play a note; the Templar never drags his victim an inch nearer to the bridge; the masked avenger takes an eternal aim with his weapon. This repose appears unnatural; for so admirably are the figures executed that they seem replete with life. One is almost led to believe, in looking on them, that they are resting beneath some spell which hinders their motion. One expects every moment to hear the loud explosion of the arquebus, — to see the blue smoke curling, — to hear the orchestra playing the requiem of the guilty.

Few people knew what Herr Hippe's business or trade really was. That he worked at something was evident; else why the shop? Some people inclined to the belief that he was an inventor, or mechanician. His workshop was in the rear of the store, and into that sanctuary no one but himself had admission. He arrived in Golosh Street eight or ten years ago, and one fine morning, the neighbors, taking down their shutters, observed that No. 13 had got a tenant. A tall, thin, sallow-faced man stood on a ladder outside the shop entrance, nailing up a large board, on which "Herr Hippe, Wondersmith," was painted in black letters on a yellow ground. The little theatre stood in the window, where it stood ever after, and Herr Hippe was established.

But what was a Wondersmith? people asked each other. No one could reply. Madame Filomel was consulted; but she looked grave, and said that it was none of her business. Mr. Pippel, the bird-fancier, who was a German, and ought to know best, thought it was the English for some singular Teutonic profession; but his replies were so vague that Golosh Street was as unsatisfied as ever. Solon, the little humpback, who kept the odd-volume book-stall at the lowest corner, could throw no light upon it. And at length people had to come to the conclusion that Herr Hippe was either a coiner or a magician, and opinions were divided.

II

A BOTTLEFUL OF SOULS

It was a dull December evening. There was little trade doing in Golosh Street, and the shutters were up at most of the shops. Hippe's store had been closed at least an hour, and the Mino-birds and Bohemian wax-wings at Mr. Pippel's had their heads tucked under their wings in their first sleep.

Herr Hippe sat in his parlor, which was lit by a pleasant wood-fire. There were no candles in the room, and the flickering blaze played fantastic tricks on the pale-gray walls. It seemed the festival of shadows. Processions of shapes, obscure and indistinct, passed across the leaden-hued panels and vanished in the dusky corners. Every fresh blaze flung up by the wayward logs created new images. Now it was a funeral throng, with the bowed figures of mourners, the shrouded coffin, the plumes that waved like extinguished torches; now a knightly cavalcade with flags and lances, and

weird horses, that rushed silently along until they met the angle of the room, when they pranced through the wall and vanished.

On a table close to where Herr Hippe sat was placed a large square box of some dark wood, while over it was spread a casing of steel, so elaborately wrought in an open arabesque pattern that it seemed like a shining blue lace which was lightly stretched over its surface.

Herr Hippe lay luxuriously in his arm-chair, looking meditatively into the fire. He was tall and thin, and his skin was of a dull saffron hue. Long, straight hair, sharply cut, regular features, a long, thin mustache, that curled like a dark asp around his mouth, the expression of which was so bitter and cruel that it seemed to distill the venom of the ideal serpent, and a bony, muscular form, were the prominent characteristics of the Wondersmith.

The profound silence that reigned in the chamber was broken by a peculiar scratching at the panel of the door, like that which at the French court was formerly substituted for the ordinary knock, when it was necessary to demand admission to the royal apartments. Herr Hippe started, raised his head, which vibrated on his long neck like the head of a cobra when about to strike, and after a moment's silence uttered a strange guttural sound. The door unclosed, and a squat, broad-shouldered woman, with large, wild, oriental eyes, entered softly.

"Ah! Filomel, you are come!" said the Wondersmith, sinking back in his chair. "Where are the rest of them?"

"They will be here presently," answered Madame Filomel, seating herself in an arm-chair much too narrow for a person of her proportions, and over the sides of which she bulged like a pudding.

"Have you brought the souls?" asked the Wondersmith.

"They are here," said the fortune-teller, drawing a large pot-bellied black bottle from under her cloak. "Ah! I have had such trouble with them!"

"Are they of the right brand, — wild, tearing, dark, devilish fellows? We want no essence of milk and honey, you know. None but souls bitter as hemlock or scorching as lightning will suit our purpose."

"You will see, you will see, Grand Duke of Egypt! They are ethereal demons, every one of them. They are the pick of a thousand births. Do you think that I, old midwife that I am, don't know the squall of the demon child from that of the angel child, the very moment they are delivered?"

Ask a musician how he knows, even in the dark, a note struck by Thalberg from one struck by Liszt!"

"I long to test them," cried the Wondersmith, rubbing his hands joyfully. "I long to see how the little devils will behave when I give them their shapes. Ah! it will be a proud day for us when we let them loose upon the cursed Christian children! Through the length and breadth of the land they will go; wherever our wandering people set foot, and wherever they are, the children of the Christians shall die. Then we, the despised Bohemians, the gypsies, as they call us, will be once more lords of the earth, as we were in the days when the accursed things called cities did not exist, and men lived in the free woods and hunted the game of the forest. Toys indeed! Ay, ay, we will give the little dears toys! toys that all day will sleep calmly in their boxes, seemingly stiff and wooden and without life, — but at night, when the souls enter them, will arise and surround the cots of the sleeping children, and pierce their hearts with their keen, envenomed blades! Toys indeed! O, yes! I will sell them toys!"

And the Wondersmith laughed horribly, while the snaky mustache on his upper lip writhed as if it had truly a serpent's power and could sting.

"Have you got your first batch, Herr Hippe?" asked Madame Filomel. "Are they all ready?"

"O, ay! they are ready," answered the Wondersmith with gusto, — opening, as he spoke, the box covered with the blue steel lace-work; "they are here."

The box contained a quantity of exquisitely carved wooden manikins of both sexes, painted with great dexterity so as to present a miniature resemblance to nature. They were, in fact, nothing more than admirable specimens of those toys which children delight in placing in various positions on the table, — in regiments, or sitting at meals, or grouped under the stiff green trees which always accompany them in the boxes in which they are sold at the toy-shops.

The peculiarity, however, about the manikins of Herr Hippe was not alone the artistic truth with which the limbs and the features were gifted; but on the countenance of each little puppet the carver's art had wrought an expression of wickedness that was appalling. Every tiny face had its special stamp of ferocity. The lips were thin and brimful of malice; the small black bead-like eyes glittered with the fire of a universal hate. There was not

one of the manikins, male or female, that did not hold in his or her hand some miniature weapon. The little men, scowling like demons, clasped in their wooden fingers swords delicate as a housewife's needle. The women, whose countenances expressed treachery and cruelty, clutched infinitesimal daggers, with which they seemed about to take some terrible vengeance.

"Good!" said Madame Filomel, taking one of the manikins out of the box and examining it attentively; "you work well, Duke Balthazar! These little ones are of the right stamp; they look as if they had mischief in them. Ah! here come our brothers."

At this moment the same scratching that preceded the entrance of Madame Filomel was heard at the door, and Herr Hippe replied with a hoarse, guttural cry. The next moment two men entered. The first was a small man with very brilliant eyes. He was wrapt in a long shabby cloak, and wore a strange nondescript species of cap on his head, such a cap as one sees only in the low billiard-rooms in Paris. His companion was tall, long-limbed, and slender; and his dress, although of the ordinary cut, either from the disposition of colors, or from the careless, graceful attitudes of the wearer, assumed a certain air of picturesqueness. Both the men possessed the same marked oriental type of countenance which distinguished the Wondersmith and Madame Filomel. True gypsies they seemed, who would not have been out of place telling fortunes, or stealing chickens in the green lanes of England, or wandering with their wild music and their sleight-of-hand tricks through Bohemian villages.

"Welcome, brothers!" said the Wondersmith; "you are in time. Sister Filomel has brought the souls, and we are about to test them. Monsieur Kerplonne, take off your cloak. Brother Oaksmith, take a chair. I promise you some amusement this evening; so make yourselves comfortable. Here is something to aid you."

And while the Frenchman, Kerplonne, and his tall companion, Oaksmith, were obeying Hippe's invitation, he reached over to a little closet let into the wall, and took thence a squat bottle and some glasses, which he placed on the table.

"Drink, brothers!" he said; "it is not Christian blood, but good stout wine of Oporto. It goes right to the heart, and warms one like the sunshine of the south."

"It is good," said Kerplonne, smacking his lips with enthusiasm.

"Why don't you keep brandy? Hang wine!" cried Oaksmith, after having swallowed two bumpers in rapid succession.

"Bah! Brandy has been the ruin of our race. It has made us sots and thieves. It shall never cross my threshold," cried the Wondersmith, with a sombre indignation.

"A little of it is not bad, though, Duke," said the fortune-teller. "It consoles us for our misfortunes; it gives us the crowns we once wore; it restores to us the power we once wielded; it carries us back, as if by magic, to that land of the sun from which fate has driven us; it darkens the memory of all the evils that we have for centuries suffered."

"It is a devil; may it be cursed!" cried Herr Hippe, passionately. "It is a demon that stole from me my son, the finest youth in all Courland. Yes! my son, the son of the Waywode Balthazar, Grand Duke of Lower Egypt, died raving in a gutter, with an empty brandy-bottle in his hands. Were it not that the plant is a sacred one to our race, I would curse the grape and the vine that bore it."

This outburst was delivered with such energy that the three gypsies kept silence. Oaksmith helped himself to another glass of port, and the fortune-teller rocked to and fro in her chair, too much overawed by the Wondersmith's vehemence of manner to reply. The little Frenchman, Kerplonne, took no part in the discussion, but seemed lost in admiration of the manikins, which he took from the box in which they lay, handling them with the greatest care.

After the silence had lasted for about a minute, Herr Hippe broke it with the sudden question, "How does your eye get on, Kerplonne?"

"Excellently, Duke. It is finished. I have it here." And the little Frenchman put his hand into his breeches pocket and pulled out a large artificial human eye. Its great size was the only thing in this eye that would lead any one to suspect its artificiality. It was at least twice the size of life; but there was a fearful speculative light in its iris, which seemed to expand and contract like the eye of a living being, that rendered it a horrible staring paradox. It looked like the naked eye of the Cyclops, torn from his forehead, and still burning with wrath and the desire for vengeance.

The little Frenchman laughed pleasantly as he held the eye in his hand, and gazed down on that huge, dark pupil, that stared back at him, it seemed, with an air of defiance and mistrust.

"It is a devil of an eye," said the little man, wiping the enamelled surface with an old silk pocket-handkerchief; "it reads like a demon. My niece — the unhappy one — has a wretch of a lover, and I have a long time feared that she would run away with him. I could not read her correspondence, for she kept her writing-desk closely locked. But I asked her yesterday to keep this eye in some very safe place for me. She put it, as I knew she would, into her desk, and by its aid I read every one of her letters. She was to run away next Monday, the ungratefull but she will find herself disappointed."

And the little man laughed heartily at the success of his stratagem, and polished the great eye until that optic seemed to grow sore with rubbing.

"And you have been at work, too, I see, Herr Hippe. Your manikins are excellent. But where are the souls?"

"In that bottle," answered the Wondersmith, pointing to the pot-bellied black bottle that Madame Filomel had brought with her. "Yes, Monsieur Kerplonne," he continued, "my manikins are well made. I invoked the aid of Abigor, the demon of soldiery, and he inspired me. The little fellows will be famous assassins when they are animated. We will try them to-night."

"Good!" cried Kerplonne, rubbing his hands joyously. "It is close upon New Year's day. We will fabricate millions of the little murderers by New Year's eve, and sell them in large quantities; and when the households are all asleep, and the Christian children are waiting for Santa Claus to come, the small ones will troop from their boxes, and the Christian children will die. It is famous! Health to Abigor!"

"Let us try them at once," said Oaksmith. "Is your daughter, Zonéla, in bed, Herr Hippe? Are we secure from intrusion?"

"No one is stirring about the house," replied the Wondersmith, gloomily.

Filomel leaned over to Oaksmith, and said in an undertone, "Why do you mention his daughter? You know he does not like to have her spoken about."

"I will take care that we are not disturbed," said Kerplonne, rising. "I will put my eye outside the door, to watch."

He went to the door and placed his great eye upon the floor with tender care. As he did so, a dark form, unseen by him or his second vision, glided along the passage noiselessly, and was lost in the darkness.

"Now for it!" exclaimed Madame Filomel, taking up her fat black bottle. "Herr Hippe, prepare your manikins!"

The Wondersmith took the little dolls out, one by one, and set them upon the table. Such an array of villanous countenances was never seen. An army of Italian bravoës, seen through the wrong end of a telescope, or a band of prisoners at the galleys in Liliput, will give some faint idea of the appearance they presented. While Madame Filomel uncorked the black bottle, Herr Hippe covered the dolls with a species of linen tent, which he took also from the box. This done, the fortune-teller held the mouth of the bottle to the door of the tent, gathering the loose cloth closely round the glass neck. Immediately tiny noises were heard inside the tent. Madame Filomel removed the bottle, and the Wondersmith lifted the covering in which he had enveloped his little people.

A wonderful transformation had taken place. Wooden and inflexible no longer, the crowd of manikins were now in full motion. The bead-like eyes turned, glittering, on all sides; the thin, wicked lips quivered with bad passions; the tiny hands sheathed and unsheathed the little swords and daggers. Episodes, common to life, were taking place in every direction. Here two martial manikins paid court to a pretty, sly-faced female, who smiled on each alternately, but gave her hand to be kissed to a third manikin, an ugly little scoundrel, who crouched behind her. There a pair of friendly dolls walked arm in arm, apparently on the best terms, while, all the time, one was watching his opportunity to stab the other in the back.

"I think they'll do," said the Wondersmith, chuckling as he watched these various incidents. "Treacherous, cruel, bloodthirsty. All goes marvelously well. But stay! I will put the grand test to them."

So saying, he drew a gold dollar from his pocket, and let it fall on the table, in the very midst of the throng of manikins. It had hardly touched the table when there was a pause on all sides. Every head was turned towards the dollar. Then about twenty of the little creatures rushed towards the glittering coin. One, fleetier than the rest, leaped upon it and drew his sword. The entire crowd of little people had now gathered round this new centre of attraction. Men and women struggled and shoved to get nearer to the piece of gold. Hardly had the first Liliputian mounted upon the treasure, when a hundred blades flashed back a defiant answer to his, and a dozen men, sword in hand, leaped upon the yellow platform and drove him off at the sword's point. Then commenced a general battle. The miniature faces were convulsed with rage and avarice. Each furious doll tried to plunge dag-

ger or sword into his or her neighbor, and the women seemed possessed by a thousand devils.

"They will break themselves into atoms," cried Filomel, as she watched with eagerness this savage *mêlée*. "You had better gather them up, Herr Hippe. I will exhaust my bottle and suck all the souls back from them."

"O, they are perfect devils! they are magnificent little demons!" cried the Frenchman, with enthusiasm. "Hippe, you are a wonderful man. Brother Oaksmith, you have no such man as Hippe among your English gypsies."

"Not exactly," answered Oaksmith, rather sullenly, "not exactly. But we have men there who can make a twelve-year-old horse look like a four-year-old, — and who can take you and Herr Hippe up with one hand, and throw you over their shoulders."

"The good God forbid!" said the little Frenchman. "I do not love such play. It is incommodious."

While Oaksmith and Kerplonne were talking, the Wondersmith had placed the linen tent over the struggling dolls, and Madame Filomel, who had been performing some mysterious manipulations with her black bottle, put the mouth once more to the door of the tent. In an instant the confused murmur within ceased. Madame Filomel corked the bottle quickly. The Wondersmith withdrew the tent, and, lo! the furious dolls were once more inflexible; and the old sinister look was again frozen on their faces.

"They must have blood, though," said Herr Hippe, as he gathered them up and put them into their box. "Mr. Pippel, the bird-fancier, is asleep. I have a key that opens his door. We will let them loose among the birds."

"Magnificent!" cried Kerplonne. "Let us go on the instant. But first let me gather up my eye."

The Frenchman pocketed his eye, after having given it a polish with the silk handkerchief; Herr Hippe extinguished the lamp; Oaksmith took a last bumper of port; and the four gypsies departed for Mr. Pippel's, carrying the box of manikins with them.

III

SOLON

THE shadow that glided along the dark corridor, at the moment that Monsieur Kerplonne deposited his sentinel eye outside the door of the

Wondersmith's apartment, sped swiftly through the passage and ascended the stairs to the attic. Here the shadow stopped at the entrance to one of the chambers and knocked at the door. There was no reply.

"Zonéla, are you asleep?" said the shadow, softly.

"O, Solon, is it you?" replied a sweet low voice from within. "I thought it was Herr Hippe. Come in."

The shadow opened the door and entered. There were neither candles nor lamp in the room; but through the projecting window, which was open, there came the faint gleams of the starlight, by which one could distinguish a female figure seated on a low stool in the middle of the floor.

"Has he left you without light again, Zonéla?" asked the shadow, closing the door. "I have brought my little lantern with me, though."

"Thank you, Solon," answered she called Zonéla; "you are a good fellow. He never gives me any light of an evening, but bids me go to bed. I like to sit sometimes and look at the moon and the stars, — the stars more than all; for they seem all the time to look right back into my face, very sadly, as if they would say, 'We see you, and pity you, and would help you, if we could.' But it is so mournful to be always looking at such myriads of melancholy eyes! and I long so to read those nice books that you lend me, Solon!"

By this time the shadow had lit the lantern and was a shadow no longer. A large head, covered with a profusion of long blonde hair, which was cut after that fashion known as *à l'enfants d'Edouard*; a beautiful pale face, lit with wide, blue, dreamy eyes; long arms and slender hands, attenuated legs, and — an enormous hump; — such was Solon, the shadow. As soon as the humpback had lit the lamp, Zonéla arose from the low stool on which she had been seated, and took Solon's hand affectionately in hers.

Zonéla was surely not of gypsy blood. That rich auburn hair, that looked almost black in the lamp-light, that pale, transparent skin, tinged with an under-glow of warm rich blood, the hazel eyes, large and soft as those of a fawn, were never begotten of a Zingaro. Zonéla was seemingly about sixteen; her figure, although somewhat thin and angular, was full of the unconscious grace of youth. She was dressed in an old cotton print, which had been once of an exceedingly boisterous pattern, but was now a mere suggestion of former splendor; while round her head was twisted, in fantastic fashion, a silk handkerchief of green ground spotted with bright crimson. This strange head-dress gave her an elfish appearance.

"I have been out all day with the organ, and I am so tired, Solon! — not sleepy, but weary, I mean. Poor Furbelow was sleepy, though, and he's gone to bed."

"I'm weary, too, Zonéla; — not weary as you are, though, for I sit in my little book-stall all day long, and do not drag round an organ and a monkey and play old tunes for pennies, — but weary of myself, of life, of the load that I carry on my shoulders"; and, as he said this, the poor humpback glanced sideways, as if to call attention to his deformed person.

"Well, but you ought not to be melancholy amidst your books, Solon. Gracious! If I could only sit in the sun and read as you do, how happy I should be! But it's very tiresome to trudge round all day with that nasty organ, and look up at the houses, and know that you are annoying the people inside; and then the boys play such bad tricks on poor Furbelow, throwing him hot pennies to pick up, and burning his poor little hands; and oh! sometimes, Solon, the men in the street make me so afraid, — they speak to me and look at me so oddly! — I'd a great deal rather sit in your book-stall and read."

"I have nothing but odd volumes in my stall," answered the humpback. "Perhaps that's right, though; for I'm nothing but an odd volume myself."

"Come, don't be melancholy, Solon. Sit down and tell me a story. I'll bring Furbelow to listen."

So saying, she went to a dusky corner of the cheerless attic room, and returned with a little Brazilian monkey in her arms, — a poor, mild, drowsy thing, that looked as if it had cried itself to sleep. She sat down on her little stool, with Furbelow in her lap, and nodded her head to Solon, as much as to say, "Go on; we are attentive."

"You want a story, do you?" said the humpback, with a mournful smile. "Well, I'll tell you one. Only what will your father say, if he catches me here?"

"Herr Hippe is not my father," cried Zonéla, indignantly. "He's a gypsy, and I know I'm stolen; and I'd run away from him, if I only knew where to run to. If I were his child, do you think that he would treat me as he does? make me trudge round the city, all day long, with a barrel-organ and a monkey, — though I love poor, dear little Furbelow, — and keep me up in a garret, and give me ever so little to eat? I know I'm not his child, for he hates me."

"Listen to my story, Zonéla, and we'll talk of that afterwards. Let me sit at your feet;" — and, having coiled himself up at the little maiden's feet, he commenced:—

"There once lived in a great city, just like this city of New York, a poor little hunchback. He kept a second-hand book-stall, where he made barely enough money to keep body and soul together. He was very sad at times, because he knew scarce any one, and those that he did know did not love him. He had passed a sickly, secluded youth. The children of his neighborhood would not play with him, for he was not made like them; and the people in the streets stared at him with pity, or scoffed at him when he went by. Ah! Zonéla, how his poor heart was wrung with bitterness when he beheld the procession of shapely men and fine women that every day passed him by in the thoroughfares of the great city! How he repined and cursed his fate as the torrent of fleet-footed firemen dashed past him to the toll of the bells, magnificent in their overflowing vitality and strength! But there was one consolation left him, — one drop of honey in the jar of gall, so sweet that it ameliorated all the bitterness of life. God had given him a deformed body, but his mind was straight and healthy. So the poor hunchback shut himself into the world of books, and was, if not happy, at least contented. He kept company with courteous paladins, and romantic heroes, and beautiful women; and this society was of such excellent breeding that it never so much as once noticed his poor crooked back or his lame walk. The love of books grew upon him with his years. He was remarked for his studious habits; and when, one day, the obscure people that he called father and mother — parents only in name — died, a compassionate book-vender gave him enough stock in trade to set up a little stall of his own. Here, in his book-stall, he sat in the sun all day, waiting for the customers that seldom came, and reading the fine deeds of the people of the ancient time, or the beautiful thoughts of the poets that had warmed millions of hearts before that hour, and still glowed for him with undiminished fire. One day, when he was reading some book, that, small as it was, was big enough to shut the whole world out from him, he heard some music in the street. Looking up from his book, he saw a little girl, with large eyes, playing an organ, while a monkey begged for alms from a crowd of idlers who had nothing in their pockets but their hands. The girl was playing, but she was also weeping. The merry notes of the polka were ground out to a silent accompaniment of

tears. She looked very sad, this organ-girl, and her monkey seemed to have caught the infection, for his large brown eyes were moist, as if he also wept. The poor hunchback was struck with pity, and called the little girl over to give her a penny, — not, dear Zonéla, because he wished to bestow alms, but because he wanted to speak with her. She came, and they talked together. She came the next day, — for it turned out that they were neighbors, — and the next, and, in short, every day. They became friends. They were both lonely and afflicted, with this difference, that she was beautiful, and he — was a hunchback."

"Why, Solon," cried Zonéla, "that's the very way you and I met!"

"It was then," continued Solon, with a faint smile, "that life seemed to have its music. A great harmony seemed to the poor cripple to fill the world. The carts that took the flour-barrels from the wharves to the store-houses seemed to emit joyous melodies from their wheels. The hum of the great business streets sounded like grand symphonies of triumph. As one who has been travelling through a barren country without much heed feels with singular force the sterility of the lands he has passed through when he reaches the fertile plains that lie at the end of his journey, so the humpback, after his vision had been freshened with this blooming flower, remembered for the first time the misery of the life that he had led. But he did not allow himself to dwell upon the past. The present was so delightful that it occupied all his thoughts. Zonéla, he was in love with the organ-girl."

"O, that's so nice!" said Zonéla, innocently, — pinching poor Furbelow, as she spoke, in order to dispel a very evident snooze that was creeping over him. "It's going to be a love-story."

"Ah! but, Zonéla, he did not know whether she loved him in return. You forget that he was deformed."

"But," answered the girl gravely, "he was good."

A light like the flash of an aurora illuminated Solon's face for an instant. He put out his hand suddenly, as if to take Zonéla's and press it to his heart; but an unaccountable timidity seemed to arrest the impulse, and he only stroked Furbelow's head, — upon which that individual opened one large brown eye to the extent of the eighth of an inch, and, seeing that it was only Solon, instantly closed it again, and resumed his dream of a city where there were no organs and all the copper coin of the realm was iced.

"He hoped and feared," continued Solon, in a low, mournful voice; "but

at times he was very miserable, because he did not think it possible that so much happiness was reserved for him as the love of this beautiful, innocent girl. At night, when he was in bed, and all the world was dreaming, he lay awake looking up at the old books against the walls, thinking how he could bring about the charming of her heart. One night, when he was thinking of this, with his eyes fixed upon the mouldy backs of the odd volumes that lay on their shelves, and looked back at him wistfully, as if they would say, 'We also are like you, and wait to be completed,' it seemed as if he heard a rustle of leaves. Then, one by one, the books came down from their places to the floor, as if shifted by invisible hands, opened their worm-eaten covers, and from between the pages of each the hunchback saw issue forth a curious throng of little people that danced here and there through the apartment. Each one of these little creatures was shaped so as to bear resemblance to some one of the letters of the alphabet. One tall, long-legged fellow seemed like the letter A; a burly fellow, with a big head and a paunch, was the model of B; another leering little chap might have passed for a Q; and so on through the whole. These fairies — for fairies they were — climbed upon the hunchback's bed, and clustered thick as bees upon his pillow. 'Come!' they cried to him, 'we will lead you into fairy-land.' So saying, they seized his hand, and he suddenly found himself in a beautiful country, where the light did not come from sun or moon or stars, but floated round and over and in everything like the atmosphere. On all sides he heard mysterious melodies sung by strangely musical voices. None of the features of the landscape was definite; yet when he looked on the vague harmonies of color that melted one into another before his sight he was filled with a sense of inexplicable beauty. On every side of him fluttered radiant bodies, which darted to and fro through the illumined space. They were not birds, yet they flew like birds; and as each one crossed the path of his vision he felt a strange delight flash through his brain, and straightway an interior voice seemed to sing beneath the vaulted dome of his temples a verse containing some beautiful thought. The little fairies were all this time dancing and fluttering around him, perching on his head, on his shoulders, or balancing themselves on his fingertips. 'Where am I?' he asked, at last, of his friends, the fairies. 'Ah, Solon!' he heard them whisper, in tones that sounded like the distant tinkling of silver bells, 'this land is nameless; but those whom we lead hither, who tread its soil, and breathe its air, and gaze on its floating

sparks of light, are poets forevermore.' Having said this, they vanished, and with them the beautiful indefinite land, and the flashing lights, and the illumined air; and the hunchback found himself again in bed, with the moonlight quivering on the floor, and the dusty books on their shelves, grim and mouldy as ever, as if they had never danced through the apartment."

"You have betrayed yourself. You called yourself Solon," cried Zonéla. "Was it a dream?"

"I do not know," answered Solon; "but since that night I have been a poet."

"A poet?" screamed the little organ girl, — "a real poet, who makes verses which every one reads and every one talks of and every one pays honor to?"

"The people call me a poet," answered Solon, with a sad smile. "They do not know me by the name of Solon, for I write under an assumed title; but they praise me, and repeat my songs. But, Zonéla, I can't sing this load off of my back, can I?"

"O, bother the hump!" said Zonéla, jumping up suddenly. "You're a poet, and that's enough, isn't it? I'm so glad you're a poet, Solon! You must repeat all your best things to me, won't you?"

Solon nodded assent.

"You don't ask me," he said, "who was the little girl that the hunchback loved."

Zonéla's face flushed crimson. She turned suddenly away, and ran into a dark corner of the room. In a moment she returned with an old hand-organ in her arms.

"Play, Solon, play!" she cried. "I am so glad that I want to dance. Furbelow, come and dance in honor of Solon, the Poet."

It was her confession. Solon's eyes flamed, as if his brain had suddenly ignited. He said nothing; but a triumphant smile broke over his countenance. Zonéla, the twilight of whose cheeks was still rosy with the setting blush, caught the lazy Furbelow by his little paws; Solon turned the crank of the organ, which wheezed out as merry a polka as its asthma would allow, and the girl and the monkey commenced their fantastic dance. They had taken but a few steps when the door suddenly opened, and the tall figure of the Wondersmith appeared on the threshold. His face was convulsed with

rage, and the black snake that quivered on his upper lip seemed to rear itself as if about to spring upon the hunchback.

IV

THE MANIKINS AND THE MINOS

THE four gypsies left Herr Hippe's house cautiously, and directed their steps towards Mr. Pippel's bird-shop. Golosh Street was asleep. Nothing was stirring in that tenebrous slum, save a dog that savagely gnawed a bone which lay on a dust-heap, tantalizing him with the flavor of food without its substance. As the gypsies moved stealthily along in the darkness they had a sinister and murderous air that would not have failed to attract the attention of the policeman of the quarter, if that worthy had not at the moment been comfortably ensconced in the neighboring "Rainbow" bar-room, listening to the improvisations of that talented vocalist, Mr. Harrison, who was making impromptu verses on every possible subject, to the accompaniment of a cithern which was played by a sad little Italian in a large cloak, to whom the host of the "Rainbow" gave so many toddies and a dollar for his nightly performance.

Mr. Pippel's shop was but a short distance from the Wondersmith's house. A few moments, therefore, brought the gypsy party to the door, when, by the aid of a key which Herr Hippe produced, they silently slipped into the entry. Here the Wondersmith took a dark-lantern from under his cloak, removed the cap that shrouded the light, and led the way into the shop, which was separated from the entry only by a glass door, that yielded, like the outer one, to a key which Hippe took from his pocket. The four gypsies now entered the shop and closed the door behind them.

It was a little world of birds. On every side, whether in large or small cages, one beheld balls of various-colored feathers standing on one leg and breathing peacefully. Love-birds, nestling shoulder to shoulder, with their heads tucked under their wings and all their feathers puffed out, so that they looked like globes of malachite; English bullfinches, with ashen-colored backs, in which their black heads were buried, and corselets of a rosy down; Java sparrows, fat and sleek and cleanly; troupials, so glossy and splendid in plumage that they looked as if they were dressed in the celebrated armor of the Black Prince, which was jet, richly damascened with gold; a cock of the

rock, gleaming, a ball of tawny fire, like a setting sun; the campanero of Brazil, white as snow, with his dilatable tolling-tube hanging from his head, placid and silent; — these, with a humbler crowd of linnets, canaries, robins, mocking-birds, and phoebes, slumbered calmly in their little cages, that were hung so thickly on the wall as not to leave an inch of it visible.

"Splendid little morsels, all of them!" exclaimed Monsieur Kerplonne. "Ah, we are going to have a rare beating!"

"So Pippel does not sleep in his shop," said the English gypsy, Oaksmith.

"No. The fellow lives somewhere up one of the avenues," answered Madame Filomel. "He came, the other evening, to consult me about his fortune. I did not tell him," she added with a laugh, "that he was going to have so distinguished a sporting party on his premises."

"Come," said the Wondersmith, producing the box of manikins, "get ready with souls, Madame Filomel. I am impatient to see my little men letting out lives for the first time." Just at the moment that the Wondersmith uttered this sentence, the four gypsies were startled by a hoarse voice issuing from a corner of the room, and propounding in the most guttural tones the intemperate query of, "What'll you take?" This sottish invitation had scarce been given, when a second extremely thick voice replied from an opposite corner, in accents so rough that they seemed to issue from a throat torn and furrowed by the liquid lava of many bar-rooms, "Brandy and water."

"Hello! who's here?" muttered Herr Hippe, flashing the light of his lantern round the shop.

Oaksmith turned up his coat-cuffs, as if to be ready for a fight; Madame Filomel glided, or rather rolled, towards the door; while Kerplonne put his hand into his pocket, as if to assure himself that his supernumerary optic was all right.

"What'll you take?" croaked the voice in the corner, once more.

"Brandy and water," rapidly replied the second voice in the other corner. And then, as if by a concerted movement, a series of bibular invitations and acceptances were rolled backwards and forwards with a volubility of utterance that threw Patter *versus* Clatter into the shade.

"What the devil can it be?" muttered the Wondersmith, flashing his lantern here and there. "Ah! it is those Minos."

So saying, he stopped under one of the wicker cages that hung high up

on the wall, and raised the lantern above his head, so as to throw the light upon that particular cage. The hospitable individual who had been extending all these hoarse invitations to partake of intoxicating beverages was an inhabitant of the cage. It was a large Mino-bird, who now stood perched on his crossbar, with his yellowish-orange bill sloped slightly over his shoulder, and his white eye cocked knowingly upon the Wondersmith. The respondent voice in the other corner came from another Mino-bird, who sat in the dusk in a similar cage, also attentively watching the Wondersmith.

These Mino-birds have a singular aptitude for acquiring phrases.

"What'll you take!" repeated the Mino, cocking his other eye upon Herr Hippe.

"*Mon Dieu!* what a bird!" exclaimed the little Frenchman. "He is, in truth, polite."

"I don't know what I'll take," said Hippe, as if replying to the Mino-bird; "but I know what you'll get, old fellow! Filomel, open the cage-doors, and give me the bottle." Filomel opened, one after another, the doors of the numberless little cages, thereby arousing from slumber their feathered occupants, who opened their beaks, and stretched their claws, and stared with great surprise at the lantern and the midnight visitors.

By this time the Wondersmith had performed the mysterious manipulations with the bottle, and the manikins were once more in full motion, swarming out of their box, sword and dagger in hand, with their little black eyes glittering fiercely, and their white teeth shining. The little creatures seemed to scent their prey. The gypsies stood in the centre of the shop, watching the proceedings eagerly, while the Liliputians made in a body towards the wall and commenced climbing from cage to cage. Then was heard a tremendous fluttering of wings, and faint, despairing "quirks" echoed on all sides. In almost every cage there was a fierce manikin thrusting his sword or dagger vigorously into the body of some unhappy bird. It recalled the antique legend of the battles of the Pygmies and the Cranes. The poor love-birds lay with their emerald feathers dabbled in their heart's blood, shoulder to shoulder in death as in life. Canaries gasped at the bottom of their cages, while the water in their little glass fountains ran red. The bullfinches were an unnatural crimson on their breasts. The mocking-bird lay on his back, kicking spasmodically, in the last agonies, with a tiny sword-thrust cleaving

his melodious throat in twain, so that from the instrument which used to gush with wondrous music only scarlet drops of blood now trickled. The manikins were ruthless. Their faces were ten times wickeder than ever, as they roamed from cage to cage, slaughtering with a fury that seemed entirely unappeasable. Presently the feathery rustlings became fewer and fainter, and the little pipings of despair died away; and in every cage lay a poor murdered minstrel, with the song that abode within him forever quenched; — in every cage but two, and those two were high up on the wall; and in each glared a pair of wild, white eyes; and an orange beak, tough as steel, pointed threateningly down. With the needles which they grasped as swords all wet and warm with blood, and their beadlike eyes flashing in the light of the lantern, the Liliputian assassins swarmed up the cages in two separate bodies, until they reached the wickets of the habitations in which the Minos abode. Mino saw them coming, — had listened attentively to the many death-struggles of his comrades, and had, in fact, smelt a rat. Accordingly he was ready for the manikins. There he stood at the barbican of his castle, with formidable beak couched like a lance. The manikins made a gallant charge. "What'll you take?" was rattled out by the Mino, in a deep bass, as with one plunge of his sharp bill he scattered the ranks of the enemy, and sent three of them flying to the floor, where they lay with broken limbs. But the manikins were brave automata, and again they closed and charged the gallant Mino. Again the wicked white eyes of the bird gleamed, and again the orange bill dealt destruction. Everything seemed to be going on swimmingly for Mino, when he found himself attacked in the rear by two treacherous manikins, who had stolen upon him from behind, through the latticework of the cage. Quick as lightning the Mino turned to repel this assault, but all too late; two slender, quivering threads of steel crossed in his poor body, and he staggered into a corner of the cage. His white eyes closed, then opened; a shiver passed over his body, beginning at his shoulder-tips and dying off in the extreme tips of the wings; he gasped as if for air, and then, with a convulsive shudder, which ruffled all his feathers, croaked out feebly his little speech, "What'll you take?" Instantly from the opposite corner came the old response, still feebler than the question, — a mere gurgle, as it were, of, "Brandy and water." Then all was silent.

The Mino-birds were dead.

"They spill blood like Christians," said the Wondersmith, gazing fondly on the manikins. "They will be famous assassins."

V

TIED UP

HERR HIPPE stood in the doorway, scowling. His eyes seemed to scorch the poor hunchback, whose form, physically inferior, crouched before that baneful, blazing glance, while its head, mentally brave, reared itself as if to redeem the cowardice of the frame to which it belonged. So the attitude of the serpent: the body pliant, yielding, supple; but the crest thrown aloft, erect, and threatening. As for Zonéla, she was frozen in the attitude of motion; — a dancing nymph in colored marble; agility stunned; elasticity petrified.

Furbelow, astonished at this sudden change, and catching, with all the mysterious rapidity of instinct peculiar to the lower animals, at the enigmatical character of the situation, turned his pleading, melancholy eyes from one to another of the motionless three, as if begging that his humble intellect (pardon me, naturalists, for the use of this word "intellect" in the matter of a monkey!) should be enlightened as speedily as possible. Not receiving the desired information, he, after the manner of trained animals, returned to his muttens; in other words, he conceived that this unusual entrance, and consequent dramatic *tableau*, meant "shop." He therefore dropped Zonéla's hand, and pattered on his velvety little feet over towards the grim figure of the Wondersmith, holding out his poor little paw for the customary copper. He had but one idea drilled into him, — soulless creature that he was, — and that was alms. But I have seen creatures that professed to have souls, and that would have been indignant if you had denied them immortality, who took to the soliciting of alms as naturally as if beggary had been the original sin, and was regularly born with them, and never baptized out of them. I will give these Bandits of the Order of Charity this credit, however, that they knew the best highways and the richest fountains of benevolence, — unlike to Furbelow, who, unreasoning and indiscriminating, begged from the first person that was near. Furbelow, owing to this intellectual inferiority to the before-mentioned Alsations, frequently got more kicks than coppers, and the present supplication which he indulged in towards the Wondersmith was a terrible confirmation of the rule. The reply

to the extended pleading paw was what might be called a double-barrelled kick, — a kick to be represented by the power of two when the foot touched the object, multiplied by four when the entire leg formed an angle of 45° with the spinal column. The long, nervous leg of the Wondersmith caught the little creature in the centre of the body, doubled up his brown, hairy form, till he looked like a fur driving-glove, and sent him whizzing across the room into a far corner, where he dropped senseless and flaccid.

This vengeance which Herr Hippe executed upon Furbelow seemed to have operated as a sort of escape-valve, and he found voice. He hissed out the question, "Who are you?" to the hunchback; and in listening to that essence of sibilation it really seemed as if it proceeded from the serpent that curled upon his upper lip.

"Who are you? Deformed dog, who are you? What do you here?"

"My name is Solon," answered the fearless head of the hunchback, while the frail, cowardly body shivered and trembled inch by inch into a corner.

"So you come to visit my daughter in the night-time, when I am away?" continued the Wondersmith, with a sneering tone that dropped from his snake-wreathed mouth like poison. "You are a brave and gallant lover, are you not? Where did you win that Order of the Curse of God that decorates your shoulders? The women turn their heads and look after you in the street, when you pass, do they not? lost in admiration of that symmetrical figure, those graceful limbs, that neck pliant as the stem that moors the lotus! Elegant, conquering, Christian cripple, what do you here in my daughter's room?"

Can you imagine Jove, limitless in power and wrath, hurling from his vast grasp mountain after mountain upon the struggling Enceladus, — and picture the Titan sinking, sinking, deeper and deeper into the earth, crushed and dying, with nothing visible through the superincumbent masses of Pelion and Ossa but a gigantic head and two flaming eyes, that, despite the death which is creeping through each vein, still flash back defiance to the divine enemy? Well, Solon and Herr Hippe presented such a picture, seen through the wrong end of a telescope, — reduced in proportion, but alike in action. Solon's feeble body seemed to sink into utter annihilation beneath the horrible taunts that his enemy hurled at him, while the large, brave brow and unconquered eyes still sent forth a magnetic resistance.

Suddenly the poor hunchback felt his arm grasped. A thrill seemed to run

through his entire body. A warm atmosphere, invigorating and full of delicious odor, surrounded him. It appeared as if invisible bandages were twisted all about his limbs, giving him a strange strength. His sinking legs straightened. His powerless arms were braced. Astonished, he glanced round for an instant, and beheld Zonéla, with a world of love burning in her large lambent eyes, wreathing her round white arms about his humped shoulders. Then the poet knew the great sustaining power of love. Solon reared himself boldly.

"Sneer at my poor form," he cried, in strong vibrating tones, flinging out one long arm and one thin finger at the Wondersmith, as if he would have impaled him like a beetle. "Humiliate me if you can. I care not. You are a wretch, and I am honest and pure. This girl is not your daughter. You are like one of those demons in the fairy tales that held beauty and purity locked in infernal spells. I do not fear you, Herr Hippe. There are stories abroad about you in the neighborhood, and when you pass people say that they feel evil and blight hovering over their thresholds. You persecute this girl. You are her tyrant. You hate her. I am a cripple. Providence has cast this lump upon my shoulders. But that is nothing. The camel, that is the salvation of the children of the desert, has been given his hump in order that he might bear his human burden better. This girl, who is homeless as the Arab, is my appointed load in life, and, please God, I will carry her on this back, hunched though it may be. I have come to see her because I love her, — because she loves me. You have no claim on her; so I will take her from you."

Quick as lightning the Wondersmith had stridden a few paces, and grasped the poor cripple, who was yet quivering with the departing thunder of his passion. He seized him in his bony, muscular grasp, as he would have seized a puppet, and held him at arm's length, gasping and powerless; while Zonéla, pale, breathless, entreating, sank half-kneeling on the floor.

"Your skeleton will be interesting to science when you are dead, Mr. Solon," hissed the Wondersmith. "But before I have the pleasure of reducing you to an anatomy, which I will assuredly do, I wish to compliment you on your power of penetration, or sources of information; for I know not if you have derived your knowledge from your own mental research or the efforts of others. You are perfectly correct in your statement that this charming young person, who day after day parades the streets with a barrel-organ and a monkey, — the last unhappily indisposed at present, — lis-

tening to the degrading jokes of ribald boys and depraved men, — you are quite correct, sir, in stating that she is not my daughter. On the contrary, she is the daughter of an Hungarian nobleman who had the misfortune to incur my displeasure. I had a son, crooked spawn of a Christian! — a son, not like you, cankered, gnarled stump of life that you are, — but a youth tall and fair and noble in aspect, as became a child of one whose lineage makes Pharaoh modern, — a youth whose foot in the dance was as swift and beautiful to look at as the golden sandals of the sun when he dances upon the sea in summer. This youth was virtuous and good; and being of good race, and dwelling in a country where his rank, gypsy as he was, was recognized, he mixed with the proudest of the land. One day he fell in with this accursed Hungarian, a fierce drinker of that devil's blood called brandy. My child until that hour had avoided this bane of our race. Generous wine he drank, because the soul of the sun, our ancestor, palpitated in its purple waves. But brandy, which is fallen and accursed wine, as devils are fallen and accursed angels, had never crossed his lips, until in an evil hour he was seduced by this Christian hog, and from that day forth his life was one fiery debauch, which set only in the black waves of death. I vowed vengeance on the destroyer of my child, and I kept my word. I have destroyed *his* child, — not compassed her death, but blighted her life, steeped her in misery and poverty, and now, thanks to the thousand devils, I have discovered a new torture for her heart. She thought to solace her life with a love-episode! Sweet little epicure that she was! She shall have her little crooked lover, sha'n't she? O, yes! she shall have him, cold and stark and livid, with that great, black, heavy hunch, which no back, however broad, can bear, Death, sitting between his shoulders!"

There was something so awful and demoniac in this entire speech and the manner in which it was delivered, that it petrified Zonéla into a mere inanimate figure, whose eyes seemed unalterably fixed on the fierce, cruel face of the Wondersmith. As for Solon, he was paralyzed in the grasp of his foe. He heard, but could not reply. His large eyes, dilated with horror to far beyond their ordinary size, expressed unutterable agony.

The last sentence had hardly been hissed out by the gypsy when he took from his pocket a long, thin coil of whip-cord, which he entangled in a complicated mesh around the cripple's body. It was not the ordinary binding of a prisoner. The slender lash passed and repassed in a thousand intricate

folds over the powerless limbs of the poor humpback. When the operation was completed, he looked as if he had been sewed from head to foot in some singularly ingenious species of network.

"Now, my pretty lop-sided little lover," laughed Herr Hippe, flinging Solon over his shoulder as a fisherman might fling a netful of fish, "we will proceed to put you into your little cage until your little coffin is quite ready. Meanwhile we will lock up your darling beggar-girl to mourn over your untimely end."

So saying, he stepped from the room with his captive, and securely locked the door behind him.

When he had disappeared, the frozen Zonéla thawed, and with a shriek of anguish flung herself on the inanimate body of Furbelow.

VI

THE POISONING OF THE SWORDS

It was New Year's eve, and eleven o'clock at night. All over this great land, and in every great city in the land, curly heads were lying on white pillows, dreaming of the coming of the generous Santa Claus. Innumerable stockings hung by countless bedsides. Visions of beautiful toys, passing in splendid pageantry through myriads of dimly lit dormitories, made millions of little hearts palpitate in sleep. Ah! what heavenly toys those were that the children of this soil beheld, that mystic night, in their dreams! Painted cars with orchestral wheels, making music more delicious than the roll of planets. Agile men, of cylindrical figure, who sprang unexpectedly out of meek-looking boxes, with a supernatural fierceness in their crimson cheeks and fur-whiskers. Herds of marvellous sheep, with fleeces as impossible as the one that Jason sailed after; animals entirely indifferent to grass and water and "rot" and "ticks." Horses spotted with an astounding regularity, and furnished with the most ingenious methods of locomotion. Slender foreigners, attired in painfully short tunics, whose existence passed in continually turning heels over head down a steep flight of steps, at the bottom of which they lay in an exhausted condition with dislocated limbs, until they were restored to their former elevation, when they went at it again as if nothing had happened. Stately swans, that seemed to have a touch of the ostrich in them; for they swam continually after a piece of iron which was held before

them, as if consumed with a ferruginous hunger. Whole farmyards of roosters, whose tails curled the wrong way, — a slight defect, that was, however, amply atoned for by the size and brilliancy of their scarlet combs, which, it would appear, Providence had intended for pen-wipers. Pears, that, when applied to youthful lips, gave forth sweet and inspiring sounds. Regiments of soldiers, that performed neat but limited evolutions on cross-jointed contractile battle-fields. All these things, idealized, transfigured, and illuminated by the powers and atmosphere and colored lamps of dream-land, did the millions of dear sleeping children behold, the night of the New Year's eve of which I speak.

It was on this night, when Time was preparing to shed his skin, and come out young and golden and glossy as ever, — when, in the vast chambers of the universe, silent and infallible preparations were making for the wonderful birth of the coming year, — when mystic dewes were secreted for his baptism, and mystic instruments were tuned in space to welcome him, — it was at this holy and solemn hour that the Wondersmith and his three gypsy companions sat in close conclave in the little parlor before mentioned.

There was a fire roaring in the grate. On a table, nearly in the centre of the room, stood a huge decanter of port wine, that glowed in the blaze which lit the chamber like a flask of crimson fire. On every side, piled in heaps, inanimate, but scowling with the same old wondrous scowl, lay myriads of the manikins, all clutching in their wooden hands their tiny weapons. The Wondersmith held in one hand a small silver bowl filled with a green, glutinous substance, which he was delicately applying, with the aid of a camel's-hair brush, to the tips of tiny swords and daggers. A horrible smile wandered over his sallow face, — a smile as unwholesome in appearance as the sickly light that plays above reeking graveyards.

"Let us drink great draughts, brothers," he cried, leaving off his strange anointment for a while, to lift a great glass, filled with sparkling liquor, to his lips. "Let us drink to our approaching triumph. Let us drink to the great poison, Macousha. Subtle seed of Death, — swift hurricane that sweeps away Life, — vast hammer that crushes brain and heart and artery with its resistless weight, — I drink to it."

"It is a noble decoction, Duke Balthazar," said the old fortune-teller and midwife, Madame Filomel, nodding in her chair as she swallowed her wine in great gulps. "Where did you obtain it?"

"It is made," said the Wondersmith, swallowing another great draught of wine ere he replied, "in the wild woods of Guiana, in silence and in mystery. But one tribe of Indians, the Macoushi Indians, know the secret. It is simmered over fires built of strange woods, and the maker of it dies in the making. The place, for a mile around the spot where it is fabricated, is shunned as accursed. Devils hover over the pot in which it stews; and the birds of the air, scenting the smallest breath of its vapor from far away, drop to earth with paralyzed wings, cold and dead."

"It kills, then, fast?" asked Kerplonne, the artificial-eye maker, — his own eyes gleaming, under the influence of the wine, with a sinister lustre, as if they had been fresh from the factory, and were yet untarnished by use.

"Kills?" echoed the Wondersmith, derisively; "it is swifter than thunderbolts, stronger than lightning. But you shall see it proved before we let forth our army on the city accursed. You shall see a wretch die, as if smitten by a falling fragment of the sun."

"What? Do you mean Solon?" asked Oaksmith and the fortune-teller together.

"Ah! you mean the young man who makes the commerce with books?" echoed Kerplonne. "It is well. His agonies will instruct us."

"Yes! Solon," answered Hippe, with a savage accent. "I hate him, and he shall die this horrid death. Ah! how the little fellows will leap upon him, when I bring him in, bound and helpless, and give their beautiful wicked souls to them! How they will pierce him in ten thousand spots with their poisoned weapons, until his skin turns blue and violet and crimson, and his form swells with the venom, — until his hump is lost in shapeless flesh! He hears what I say, every word of it. He is in the closet next door, and is listening. How comfortable he feels! How the sweat of terror rolls on his brow! How he tries to loosen his bonds, and curses all earth and heaven when he finds that he cannot! Ho! ho! Handsome lover of Zonéla, will she kiss you when you are livid and swollen? Brothers, let us drink again, — drink always. Here, Oaksmith, take these brushes, — and you, Filomel, — and finish the anointing of these swords. This wine is grand. This poison is grand. It is fine to have good wine to drink, and good poison to kill with; is it not?" — and, with flushed face and rolling eyes, the Wondersmith continued to drink and use his brush alternately.

The others hastened to follow his example. It was a horrible scene: those

four wicked faces; those myriads of tiny faces, just as wicked; the certain unearthly air that pervaded the apartment; the red, unwholesome glare cast by the fire; the wild and reckless way in which the weird company drank the red-illuminated wine.

The anointing of the swords went on rapidly, and the wine went as rapidly down the throats of the four poisoners. Their faces grew more and more inflamed each instant; their eyes shone like rolling fireballs; their hair was moist and dishevelled. The old fortune-teller rocked to and fro in her chair, like those legless plaster figures that sway upon convex loaded bottoms. All four began to mutter incoherent sentences, and babble unintelligible wickednesses. Still the anointing of the swords went on.

"I see the faces of millions of young corpses," babbled Herr Hippe, gazing, with swimming eyes, into the silver bowl that contained the Macousha poison, — "all young, all Christians, — and the little fellows dancing, dancing, and stabbing, stabbing. Filomel, Filomel, I say!"

"Well, Grand Duke," snored the old woman, giving a violent lurch.

"Where's the bottle of souls?"

"In my right-hand pocket, Herr Hippe"; — and she felt, so as to assure herself that it was there. She half drew out the black bottle, before described in this narrative, and let it slide again into her pocket, — let it slide again, but it did not completely regain its former place. Caught by some accident, it hung half out, swaying over the edge of the pocket, as the fat midwife rolled backwards and forwards in her drunken efforts at equilibrium.

"All right," said Herr Hippe, "perfectly right! Let's drink."

He reached out his hand for his glass, and, with a dull sigh, dropped on the table, in the instantaneous slumber of intoxication. Oaksmith soon fell back in his chair, breathing heavily. Kerplonne followed. And the heavy, stertorous breathing of Filomel told that she slumbered also; but still her chair retained its rocking motion, and still the bottle of souls balanced itself on the edge of her pocket.

VII

LET LOOSE

SURE enough, Solon heard every word of the fiendish talk of the Wonder-smith. For how many days he had been shut up, bound in the terrible net,

in that dark closet, he did not know; but now he felt that his last hour was come. His little strength was completely worn out in efforts to disentangle himself. Once a day a door opened, and Herr Hippe placed a crust of bread and a cup of water within his reach. On this meagre fare he had subsisted. It was a hard life; but, bad as it was, it was better than the horrible death that menaced him. His brain reeled with terror at the prospect of it. Then, where was Zonéla? Why did she not come to his rescue? But she was, perhaps, dead. The darkness, too, appalled him. A faint light, when the moon was bright, came at night through a chink far up in the wall; and the only other hole in the chamber was an aperture through which, at some former time, a stove-pipe had been passed. Even if he were free, there would have been small hope of escape; but, laced as it were in a network of steel, what was to be done? He groaned and writhed upon the floor, and tore at the boards with his hands, which were free from the wrists down. All else was as solidly laced up as an Indian papoose. Nothing but pride kept him from shrieking aloud, when, on the night of New Year's eve, he heard the fiendish Hippe recite the programme of his murder.

While he was thus wailing and gnashing his teeth in darkness and torture, he heard a faint noise above his head. Then something seemed to leap from the ceiling and alight softly on the floor. He shuddered with terror. Was it some new torture of the Wondersmith's invention? The next moment, he felt some small animal crawling over his body, and a soft, silky paw was pushed timidly across his face. His heart leaped with joy.

"It is Furbelow!" he cried. "Zonéla has sent him. He came through the stove-pipe hole."

It was Furbelow, indeed, restored to life by Zonéla's care, and who had come down a narrow tube, that no human being could have threaded, to console the poor captive. The monkey nestled closely into the hunchback's bosom, and, as he did so, Solon felt something cold and hard hanging from his neck. He touched it. It was sharp. By the dim light that struggled through the aperture high up in the wall, he discovered a knife, suspended by a bit of cord. Ah! how the blood came rushing through the veins that crossed over and through his heart, when life and liberty came to him in this bit of rusty steel! With his manacled hands he loosened the heaven-sent weapon; a few cuts were rapidly made in the cunning network of cord that enveloped his limbs, and in a few seconds he was free! — cramped and faint

with hunger, but free! — free to move, to use the limbs that God had given him for his preservation, — free to fight, — to die fighting, perhaps, — but still to die free. He ran to the door. The bolt was a weak one, for the Wonder-smith had calculated more surely on his prison of cords than on any jail of stone, — and more; and with a few efforts the door opened. He went cautiously out into the darkness, with Furbelow perched on his shoulder, pressing his cold muzzle against his cheek. He had made but a few steps when a trembling hand was put into his, and in another moment Zonéla's palpitating heart was pressed against his own. One long kiss, an embrace, a few whispered words, and the hunchback and the girl stole softly towards the door of the chamber in which the four gypsies slept. All seemed still; nothing but the hard breathing of the sleepers and the monotonous rocking of Madame Filomel's chair broke the silence. Solon stooped down and put his eye to the keyhole, through which a red bar of light streamed into the entry. As he did so, his foot crushed some brittle substance that lay just outside the door; at the same moment a howl of agony was heard to issue from the room within. Solon started; nor did he know that at that instant he had crushed into dust Monsieur Kerplonne's supernumerary eye, and the owner, though wrapt in a drunken sleep, felt the pang quiver through his brain.

While Solon peeped through the keyhole, all in the room was motionless. He had not gazed, however, for many seconds, when the chair of the fortune-teller gave a sudden lurch, and the black bottle, already hanging half out of her wide pocket, slipped entirely from its resting-place, and, falling heavily to the ground, shivered into fragments.

Then took place an astonishing spectacle. The myriads of armed dolls, that lay in piles about the room, became suddenly imbued with motion. They stood up straight, their tiny limbs moved, their black eyes flashed with wicked purposes, their thread-like swords gleamed as they waved them to and fro. The villainous souls imprisoned in the bottle began to work within them. Like the Lilliputians, when they found the giant Gulliver asleep, they scaled in swarms the burly sides of the four sleeping gypsies. At every step they took, they drove their thin swords and quivering daggers into the flesh of the drunken authors of their being. To stab and kill was their mission, and they stabbed and killed with incredible fury. They clustered on the Wondersmith's sallow cheeks and sinewy throat, piercing every portion

with their diminutive poisoned blades. Filomel's fat carcass was alive with them. They blackened the spare body of Monsieur Kerplonne. They covered Oaksmith's huge form like a cluster of insects.

Overcome completely with the fumes of wine, these tiny wounds did not for a few moments awaken the sleeping victims. But the swift and deadly poison, Macousha, with which the weapons had been so fiendishly anointed, began to work. Herr Hippe, stung into sudden life, leaped to his feet, with a dwarf army clinging to his clothes and his hands, — always stabbing, stabbing, stabbing. For an instant, a look of stupid bewilderment clouded his face; then the horrible truth burst upon him. He gave a shriek like that which a horse utters when he finds himself fettered and surrounded by fire, — a shriek that curdled the air for miles and miles.

“Oaksmith! Kerplonne! Filomel! Awake! awake! We are lost! The souls have got loose! We are dead! poisoned! O accursed ones! O demons, ye are slaying me! Ah! fiends of hell!”

Aroused by these frightful howls, the three gypsies sprang also to their feet, to find themselves stung to death by the manikins. They raved, they shrieked, they swore. They staggered round the chamber. Blinded in the eyes by the ever-stabbing weapons, — with the poison already burning in their veins like red-hot lead, — their forms swelling and discoloring visibly every moment, — their howls and attitudes and furious gestures made the scene look like a chamber in hell.

Maddened beyond endurance, the Wondersmith, half-blind and choking with the venom that had congested all the blood-vessels of his body, seized dozens of the manikins and dashed them into the fire, trampling them down with his feet.

“Ye shall die too, if I die,” he cried, with a roar like that of a tiger. “Ye shall burn, if I burn. I gave ye life, — I give ye death. Down! — down! — burn! — flame! Fiends that ye are, to slay us! Help me, brothers! Before we die, let us have our revenge!”

On this, the other gypsies, themselves maddened by approaching death, began hurling manikins, by handfuls, into the fire. The little creatures, being wooden of body, quickly caught the flames, and an awful struggle for life took place in miniature in the grate. Some of them escaped from between the bars and ran about the room, blazing, writhing in agony, and igniting the curtains and other draperies that hung around. Others fought

and stabbed one another in the very core of the fire, like combating salamanders. Meantime, the motions of the gypsies grew more languid and slow, and their curses were uttered in choked guttural tones. The faces of all four were spotted with red and green and violet, like so many egg-plants. Their bodies were swollen to a frightful size, and at last they dropped on the floor, like over-ripe fruit shaken from the boughs by the winds of autumn.

The chamber was now a sheet of fire. The flames roared round and round, as if seeking for escape, licking every projecting cornice and sill with greedy tongues, as the serpent licks his prey before he swallows it. A hot, putrid breath came through the keyhole, and smote Solon and Zonéla like a wind of death. They clasped each other's hands with a moan of terror, and fled from the house.

The next morning, when the young year was just unclosing its eyes, and the happy children all over the great city were peeping from their beds into the myriads of stockings hanging near by, the blue skies of heaven shone through a black network of stone and charred rafters. These were all that remained of the habitation of Herr Hippe, the Wondersmith.



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The Angel with Purple Hair

by HERB PAUL

IT WAS between the dark and the daylight, when the folks up about Fifty-fifth and Fifth are accustomed to stir about in a spirit of restlessness, and she came walking into the dim-lit hush-plush of the Mabuhay Club, slim and lovely in a clinging business of gold lamé, and she whipped the ghost of a smile over Craig Gordon's new dinner jacket with its fresh carnation. Then she expertly folded her wings and slid gracefully into the upholstered corner where Craig puts strangers whom he hasn't quite sized up, and as her beautiful head went by the carnation Craig could see that her hair was a pale purple and he could smell that it smelled of dew on spring roses. She smiled up at him, gently, and then he decided to take a breath.

"Good evening . . ." he said. The 'Madame' stuck in his throat and stayed there.

"Good evening, Mr. Gordon." The voice was low as a whisper, and he thought of an Aeolian harp. He hadn't in years.

The crest of one great white wing stirred restlessly behind her shoulder and she frowned ever so slightly. Gordon stepped nervously back and swallowed and remembered to take another breath. He was staring at the wing in terrible fascination.

"Mr. Gordon," she murmured.

He leaned forward attentively.

"Your — your — Highness?" he stammered. It was the only thing to say. He smiled proudly, and a little foolishly.

"You have got the table on my left wing tip," she said.

He dove to his knees cracking his head smartly on the table in passing. One broad white tip-feather was crushed beneath the gate leg of the table. He heaved frantically at the heavy base and as it gave, the wing tip lifted, stirred for a moment, and came to rest beside the golden slipper heel. Gordon straightened up hurriedly, cracking his head again.

"Damn!" he said. Immediately he was sorry.

"Poor Mr. Gordon!"

She touched his forehead with slim, tanned fingers. He stayed there. Craig Gordon was, and is, a highly intelligent man.

"Thank you so much, Mr. Gordon," she smiled, and then he got up slowly and straightened his jacket. "Now, if you don't mind I'll not bother to order just yet. You see, I'm waiting for a friend. He'll be here in three minutes."

The right wing stirred and the slim fingers stroked it into quiescence. Gordon didn't move. He couldn't.

"Thank you, Mr. Gordon."

"I'm so very, very sorry . . ." he began, bowing and backing away.

"It was nothing. They do get in the way sometimes!" Again the quick smile, and again that harp in the wind.

Craig Gordon turned away and walked slowly back to his post at the gilded doors. George, the doorman, resplendent in maroon and gold, his nose flattened against the plate glass, was frantically wagging his white gloves. Eloquently Craig frowned. The nose unflattened reluctantly, but the heavy glass door swung open a crack.

"Boss! Wor'n hell is *that*!" A hoarse, reaching whisper.

Gordon stepped out onto the sidewalk and eyed his henchman with pained dignity.

"That," he said, "is an angel with purple hair. She's waiting for a friend. And," he added, "she has trouble managing her wings so let's look sharp with this door."

"Wit poiple hair, he says!" George shook his head slowly and sadly. "Look, Boss, them wings woik — I seen 'em move!"

"I seen 'em too!" Gordon replied, and he added thoughtfully, "Now

you've seen everything." Then he turned away. He looked at his watch. About three minutes.

George touched his cap as the taxi slid in to the curb and he opened the door with an automatic and practised flourish. No tip. No lady. Quiet looking young fellow. Sunburnt. A little wrinkled for the Mabuhay. George remembered him vaguely. Long and lean. Worried look about him.

"Evening, sir!" he said.

"Hi."

He ducked the marquee and a big easy hand brushed the heavy glass door aside.

"Hi, Mr. Gordon," he said.

Craig rarely forgot a name. A face never. But after all he was a little upset. Then it came back. Jake Halloran, test pilot out at Monarch Aircraft. Lot of publicity lately . . . new jet fighter, fast like lightning but with bugs in it. Giving everybody trouble. Nice looking kid, this Halloran. Looks as though he's been hitting the bottle . . . a little.

"A seat at the bar, Mr. Halloran?"

"Thanks," and then to the barman, "Hi, Joe."

"Hello, Mr. Halloran, how're things?"

"Quiet. I'm resting for a week. Weary in m' bones. Could do with a martini, Joe."

"Sure thing!" said Joe, who'd had one long look, and who knew when to talk and when to keep quiet. "Sure thing!" Softly.

It wasn't until the martini was put lovingly before him that he saw her. It was then that he felt the tension in the place. He felt it first in Joe's quick, worried glance over into the room behind, and he took a quick look himself. Girl sitting alone. Pretty girl, but a bad light. *Very* pretty girl. Funny kind of a dress she had on. *Very, very* pretty girl!

He turned back to his martini and studied it thoughtfully. He didn't pick it up. Then he spoke. Gently.

"You a philosopher, Joe?"

Joe smiled indulgently.

"Psychologist?"

"Not me, Mr. Halloran. I've seen lots of 'em come and go, though."

Jake was persistent. Something on his mind, Joe decided. He put down the glass he was polishing and listened.

"Ever get a sudden feeling that you've been somewhere before . . . same place . . . same time . . . same words . . . but you can't put your finger on it?" Jake studied his glass again.

"Know what you mean," Joe said, "happens to everybody — even me, once in a while." Then he added, proudly, "French call it *déjà vu*. Means 'seen before' or something. But you've been here lots lately."

Jake Halloran shook his head.

"That's not it, Joe," he said. He shook his head again, sharply, and ran his hand across his forehead.

He's plenty worried, Joe was thinking. Or maybe tight. . . . No, not tight. Then Joe leaned on the bar and watched.

Jake Halloran turned slowly, an inch at a time, toward that dim corner where the strangers sit. His eyes were on the floor until he faced the corner and then he raised them slowly. For a long minute he sat there and then slowly he got up and walked towards her.

She smiled, and the smile lit up the room. She moved aside and the slim brown hand patted the seat beside her.

"Hi," she whispered. There was the harp again. "I've been waiting for you!"

"I know," he said.

The great white wings moved quietly in the dimness and he saw them move but he was not surprised.

"I know," he repeated, and he sat down gently beside her, being careful about the wings. "I knew you would be here."

"Of course you knew," she said. "I sent for you."

He nodded slowly and looked full into her eyes. Then he looked at her hair and he smelled the dew from the roses.

"Your hair," he began, "it's lovely."

"Heliotrope," she answered, and then she added, "Pale purple."

"I remember now," he said.

"But you've never seen me before!"

"No," he answered, "but I remember."

She touched his hand gently.

"You've not been very well, Jake Halloran!"

He looked from her eyes down at the table.

"I'm fine," he said and he flexed strong brown fingers.

"I mean inside, Jake." Her voice was a caress. "What's happened, to the boy I followed to New Guinea and back? Lost something?"

"You, I guess."

She nodded thoughtfully.

"I thought you were going good. Expect I've left you alone too long." Then she searched his face. "Been drinking a bit, Jake?"

He nodded slowly without answering.

"Sobering up," he said. "Week of it. I've been having some trouble with that new Cheetah job. Too hot. Too wild. I was about to blow my top. Had to relax someway."

"I know," she said. "Have one with me, Jake?"

"You . . . drink?" He was a little startled.

"Scotch and milk," she smiled. "Call the waiter, and hurry! We've got things to do!"

By twos and trickles the Club Mabuhay was filling. Craig Gordon sadly clicked the switch that controlled the dim wall light over the strangers' corner, and diplomatically steered some of his best customers from their favorite tables. He kept nervous watch over the dark corner, and so well had he controlled the lighting that he lost only two customers. In the middle of frozen daiquiris. Those wings! The hair, alone, the Mabuhay could handle.

Jake Halloran paid his check at the bar and studied the gilt and plate glass door carefully. He looked over the chattering crowd and eased over to Craig Gordon's post by the door.

"Got a back entrance, Mr. Gordon?" he queried anxiously.

"Know what you mean, Mr. Halloran," Gordon replied. "There is a back door, but it's out through the store room. Narrow. Boxes and stuff. She'd never make it!" He peered speculatively over Halloran's shoulder.

"Thanks. Will you get me a cab? A big one?"

Gordon nodded nervously and eased the glass doors open a crack.

"George," he said, "get me the biggest cab you can find and look sharp on this door!"

The nose flattened immediately, against the glass.

Jake Halloran stood by the table and looked down.

"Let's go," he said. "We've got things to do."

She stood up. The wings settled smoothly along the sheath of gold lamé. A crackling silence filled the Club Mabuhay.

"Let's go," she said.

George was sharp with the door.

Behind there was bedlam.

The big taxi swung smartly into Sutton Place and pulled up near the corner of Fifty-sixth. "This is it," said Jake.

"Costume party, hey Mac?" quipped the driver brightly.

"I can only stay a minute, Jake," she said. "Things to do."

"Gotta find you a place to stay," said Jake. "Like the Plaza?"

"I think I would. Do you?"

"Yup . . . know the assistant manager. We'll call him."

"Good!" she murmured. "And do I meet Stewart now?"

"You know about Tom?"

"Sure!"

"Nice guy. With me at Nadzab."

She smiled.

"I know," she said. "I know him well. I rode with him one day."

"I'm jealous."

"Not of Tom, Jake. He needed me that day."

"I remember," he said. "It was the day the Betty tagged him over Buna."

"And then you tagged the Betty!"

"You put me there!"

She smiled up at him as they climbed the stairs.

"I love you," he said.

He swung the door open wide and the wings came through and Stewart sat there with the phone in one hand and a glass in the other and he had on a pair of chartreuse shorts. That was all. He didn't look around but he saluted backwards, over his shoulder, with the glass.

"But darling," he was saying to the phone, "I'm a changed man. That night was years ago and I'm more mature now!" And then he listened and covered the mouthpiece with the back of his glass hand. "Hi, Jake!" he said to the room behind. "How's about a short one?"

"Company, Tom," Jake said gently.

The great white wings were spread softly over the back of the divan and the smile warmed the room and the voice that belonged to the wind was speaking.

"Hi, Tom," she said.

Stewart spun off the chair and made a wild leap for the bathroom door. And then he saw the wings. He froze, and the glass in his hand dropped quietly onto the carpet.

"Hello, Tom Stewart!" she said again.

He forgot the phone, and the glass and the chartreuse shorts.

"I know you," he said and his eyes were fixed and glazed. "What have you done to your hair?"

"Potts thought I was kidding," Jake explained as they rolled up to the Plaza's Fifty-ninth Street entrance. "I don't know him very well, but they're nice folks here and they'll take care of you if anyone can. They'll even keep French poodles." Thoughtlessly.

She was hurt. He knew it immediately and contrition came flooding.

"Darling, I'm sorry!"

She touched his arm.

There was a whispered flurry from the lobby as they walked in. Mr. Potts, at the desk, took one glance. Precursory. Practised.

"Good evening, Mr. Halloran . . . and is this the . . . this the . . ."

The wings were stirring restlessly.

"My God!" said Mr. Potts and he beckoned aimlessly, frantically behind him. Four bellmen and two desk clerks sprang forward. Only one of them made it. A boy from Brooklyn.

"We'd like to go right up, Mr. Potts," said Jake. "I'll register for her in a few minutes."

Mr. Potts had not spent fifteen years on the Plaza desk for nothing. To give him full credit let it be said here that he made a nice recovery. At least he was making a nice recovery until the pigeons came in. Four of them. Straight through the open door-way that looked out onto the Park. They made one swift circuit of the lobby and lighted with a whistling swish beside the golden slippers. The Plaza's Fifty-ninth Street lobby was suddenly filled with the gurgling croon of four of the fattest, dirtiest pigeons that Central Park could offer. Pigeons in ecstasy. Round and round the floor before her they waltzed and pirouetted.

One of them fluttered joyously to her shoulder, and she leaned her lovely head towards it and from deep in her throat came a soft, melodious purring

croon. From the Palm Court . . . from the East lobby . . . from the Oak Room white, staring faces came pouring. Well bred faces. Cultured voices. But all the mouths were open, and the voices were hoarse and strained.

"Please come this way, Mr. Halloran, Miss . . . Miss . . .?"

Potts made a nice recovery. Shows what training will do.

The pigeons came too. So did the contents of the East lobby, and the Palm Court, and the Oak Room. So did a couple of querulous policemen.

The multitude approached the south elevators. The pale purple head leaned caressingly toward the pigeon on the golden shoulder. Again that deep-throated croon. But this time with a rising inflection. The pigeon launched itself past Mr. Potts's head. The three others, waddling behind the golden slippers, whistled up and away and they were suddenly gone. The soft brown eyes that fixed on Mr. Potts were misty.

"Mr. Potts," she said, "Mr. Halloran and I should like to be shown to my room, and there be served a Scotch and milk. Alone."

"And that's the way it is," Jake was saying. "The way I figure it this new turbo jet is just a mite too potent for this little ship. I've worried and worked and driven myself nearly nuts with it. It flies," he said, "and how it flies!" And he lowered his eyes to his glass. "Actually, I'm afraid of it."

"What's the Cheetah's wingspan, Jake?" she asked.

"Twenty-nine feet," he said and then, curiously, "What's yours?"

"Fifteen four, tip to tip," she smiled, and she stretched them to the ceiling. She yawned. "Feels good!"

"Do you realize I don't even know what to call you?"

"Call me Bess."

"How will I register you downstairs? Address . . . that sort of thing?" She smiled gently.

"You do it, Jake. And now you must go. I'll find you after a while."

Stewart was on the telephone again when Jake returned. Another girl this time. He hung up immediately.

"Now talk?" he said.

"Tomorrow. I've got to go out to the factory now."

"Tonight, Jake? What for?"

"I've got to think. About the Cheetah. And I've got to look at it while I'm doing it."

"Jake, it's no good! That crate has got a hex. I've begged you and threatened you and pleaded with you to give it up. You're gonna knock yourself off in that crazy squirt-gun. You know they can't get anyone else to fly it. How's about forgetting it? I'll get you a date. We'll go out and hang one on, like old times. How's about it, Bud?"

"Can't. I've got a date with an angel, later on."

Stewart's ruddy face paled a little.

"Where is she now?" he demanded. "And *who* and *what* is she?"

Jake looked long at his friend.

"She's an angel," he said, "with purple hair, and she's in Room 643 at the Plaza. Her name is Bess."

"She going to stay?" Tom queried sharply.

"She can't," Jake's voice was low, "she's gotta go back. She ran away. She hasn't got a green pass."

"Back *where*?" The sharp question rang off the walls and the ceiling.

"You know where."

The Monarch Aircraft factory lay dark and empty. Down past the darkened tool rooms, on out past sub-assembly where the slim hulls of the Cheetahs lay, row on row, on through final assembly to the flight test dock, Jake and the night chief walked, their footsteps echoing from the high metal walls. There, in the ghostly light of the night lamps crouched the Cheetah. Tiny, she was, and wicked as the wind but there was a soft sheen on her swept-back silver wings and Jake reached out and touched her, ran his hand along her flanks and caressed the sleek nose.

"You can go back to your phone now, Mac," he said. "I want to crawl around her a bit. Think I've got an idea or two."

"Okay, Mr. Halloran," the guard replied. "If you need anything, use the phone over there in Dispatch," and he walked off into the murky hangar, his heels echoing hollowly on the concrete.

And there they were alone. Jake Halloran. The Cheetah.

Gently he eased back the slim plexiglass hatch and climbed up into the tiny cockpit. He settled back and toed the rudder pedals and touched the familiar stub of a control stick. With a shudder he remembered the shocking whip of that stick as she broke Mach .9 five days ago. Oh, she was fast, the bitch. If she could just be tamed. He knew, suddenly, the remorse of a quit-

ter. He had asked for this rest. Sure, he had wanted to think. But he had been afraid. Tired. But here, again, was that job to do. He couldn't quit now. He knew the design was sound. He knew the loving care that had shaped and formed those sleekly beautiful lines. He knew the tremendous surging power of the new jet engine there behind his head. He knew this ship. But *where* did she get that mean streak? That instinct to kill?

He sat bolt upright in the cockpit. Off there in the shadows something had stirred. It moved again. Towards him, and the Cheetah. And then she moved under the light and she was soft and warm in something grey and flowing and her beautiful hair caught the soft glow of the night lamp.

Jake let his head sink back against the shock pad.

"I love you," he said. And he meant it.

Without a sound or a word she walked to the Cheetah's side. Her soft chin came just to the cockpit coaming, and Jake stretched out a hand to touch her cheek.

She smiled.

"I love you, Bess," he said again.

She looked at him gravely.

"I know you do," she said.

"You know all about me, don't you?"

She nodded.

"So what do I do now?" His voice was sharp with desperation.

The lovely head leaned down to the satiny skin of the Cheetah.

"I don't know, Jake. I'll have to find out."

"Find out?" Again the sharpness of despair was in his voice. "Find out! From whom?"

The head did not lift, and the voice was a murmur.

"You know perfectly well from whom."

"Bess . . . darling . . . listen to me . . ." But his eager, earnest voice trailed off and the shadows swallowed the echo.

There was a long silence. Somewhere high up in the ceiling beams a bird twittered nervously, and the Cheetah's elevators clanged softly as Jake let go the control stick and climbed wearily out of the cockpit.

"Tomorrow we'll talk about it," she said. "Right now we've got things to do. Any ideas yet?"

"Nope."

"How does she go, Jake? 'Smatter with her?"

"High speed stall . . . whips to the left. Comes up on sonic speed . . . high mach numbers . . . like a nineteen-ten model coal truck with solid tires on cobblestones."

"How d'you figure it?"

He thought for a minute.

"Bess, I don't *know*! The only thing I'm sure about is that she's trying to kill somebody. Me! I've babied this mean little b— thing — and petted it through four major design changes. She's basically all right. I know that. I've tried everything, except long spins. I haven't spun her yet. Scared to."

"Jake, do you remember the old P-40?"

"Sure I do. I've got a lot of time in 'em. Why?"

"Do you remember that wing root stall — just off the runway — whip to the left?"

"Sure I remember it. But they licked that in a hurry. It was just one of those unpredictable things. Things happen with all new models."

"How did they lick it, Jake?"

"Why . . ." he was deep in thought now. "They put a new fillet on the wing root. She flew like an angel after that. Hey!" he said. "You mean . . . you mean?" He studied the Cheetah's beautifully faired wing root with eyes that were alight with eagerness.

Then, "I know what you mean," he said quietly. "Where's that phone?"

He talked earnestly and long with Rogers, the design engineer. Yes, the model was still available for wind tunnel tests. They could, of course, if he insisted, run some wing-root stall tests tomorrow. In ten minutes Rogers was enthusiastic too. First thing tomorrow. Would he be available for in-flight checks on the prototype?

Jake would be available.

He dashed out of the darkened Dispatch office and took her in his arms. The wings were a little in the way but she stretched them towards the high ceiling and her lips were warm and they tasted of spring roses.

"I love you, Bess!" he said again.

"I know," and there was a deep concern in her voice.

"Let's not talk about it tomorrow, Bess!" he pleaded. "Let's talk about it now."

"All right," she said. "But I must talk first."

He listened gravely.

"The world," she said, "is very large, and you, in spite of what you are about to say, have *not* seen it, nor do you know much of the joy and happiness which can be found here. . . . *Shhh!*"

He had been about to interrupt.

"You are very young — twenty-seven years and four months old you are. You are capable and strong and intelligent . . . and . . . and charming. There should be none of this bitterness in your heart. The world is not right, but you can help to make it right. This little ship, for example, is not right. Tomorrow you will make it right. In the years to come you will help to make others right. You will fall in love and marry . . . a mortal. You will have a fine, full life. I shall see to that. Personally.

"But," she continued, "you have seen fit to fall in love with me, because you are . . ." she hesitated, "because you are grateful, I suppose, and because you think me attractive . . . and because, subconsciously, you wish to escape from this world and what you choose to consider your troubles. They are *my* troubles — *you* are my trouble."

She looked him full in the eyes.

"You've given me a lot of trouble, Jake Halloran . . . and now . . . now you're giving me more. You see . . . you see . . ." and the mist was in her eyes, "I love you too!

"That," she continued firmly, "is not permitted."

And suddenly she was gone into the shadows.

Stewart was not in the apartment when he returned to Sutton Place and the loneliness closed in like the cold fog that drifts in from the Sound. He wandered aimlessly about the apartment for a while, found a half empty bottle of Scotch in the kitchen, put it back, and finally, a while after midnight, called Room 643 at the Plaza. There was no answer.

He called again at two in the morning. Still no answer. Stewart came in at four, and finally, just as the sky out over the river began to fade into grey, he fell asleep. At eight-thirty the telephone rang, and it was Rogers. He had already made one run in the tunnel. It was the wing root. It was the wing root beyond question. How about an in-flight test on the prototype at eleven? High speed turning stalls? Jake said that he would be there at ten thirty, and hung up. Then he called 643 at the Plaza. There was no answer.

He could hardly have expected her to answer. She was standing there as he put the telephone slowly back on its cradle. She was standing there looking into his eyes as he turned.

"Hi!" she said, softly. "Going flying?"

For a long, long time he looked into her eyes and then they went a little misty again and she dropped them and she was intently examining the tip of a silver slipper that was digging into the carpet.

"I love you," he said.

"I know, Jake. I *know*!"

"Stay here with me!" he said, and there was urgency and loneliness and heartache in his voice.

She raised her eyes to his own and the mist was still there.

"I can't," she whispered. "I love you . . . and I can't," and then she was suddenly in his arms.

At thirty thousand he leveled the Cheetah out of its thrusting surging climb and the sound of the slipstream rose in pitch and volume to the old familiar, terrifying whine. The roaring of the jet behind him was lost to his ears. Only the slipstream. The control stick stiffened and bucked in his hand. That was familiar too. But today it didn't matter. This business was about licked. Three tight turns left. Three right. About eight G's. Then he would have it. Then Rogers could go ahead on that new wing root.

He called back to the tower, somewhere back in the hazy spit of land that was Long Island. "Thirty thousand . . . outside air minus one five . . . Mach seven . . . slight aileron ripples . . . buffeting her elevators again . . ." and as he swept into the first turn the G suit swelled and bit into his thighs and his armpits. "Seven and a half." And then he shook his head to clear his eyes and squeezed her to the right, pulling her tighter and tighter and a grey-black curtain streaked with red closed down and he could barely read the accelerometer. "Nine . . ." and then he nosed her down and the pitch of her slipstream whine screamed into a high soprano, now left . . . and then she whipped . . . and he had it. Had it! Cold, dead and certain. And he called the tower and Rogers who was waiting there took the mike for a minute and then went scuttling down to the big drawing board in his office.

He didn't tell the tower he was going to spin it. Long, to the left. Four

turns. He didn't even know he was going to do it himself. But he did. Something told him to. Rogers would want to know. And besides, it was his day, his hour, and it was the least he could do. The least he could do.

The Cheetah arched up and out and as the high-pitched whine faded to a whisper he called in.

The tower called the front office on the interphone. Almost before the Cheetah shuddered off into her whipping, dizzy spiral they were pouring out onto the flight ramp, dozens and hundreds of them who loved Jake Halloran and the Cheetah. They saw the speck come whistling down and they knew, most of them, that it would never come out. Jake Halloran had known it after the first two turns.

He didn't try to get out with his 'chute. It was probably because he knew, somehow, that that was the way it had to be. It was because he knew, suddenly, why he had had to spin the ship, and because he knew, now, why it wouldn't come out. It was the only thing that she could have done. He knew that too.

He called the tower again. "Nineteen thousand . . . seven counted turns . . . no aileron response. She spins flat — four tries at recovery — tell Rogers she needs a tail 'chute." And there was no answer. ". . . tower — do you read?" And the tower knew that Halloran was riding her in.

The purple head was bowed in her hands and the voice that belonged to the wind was a desperate whisper. "Is this what you want, Jake — is this what you will have? Get out now, Jake. Quickly. Go out the left side . . . go out on the inside of the spin, Jake — you know how . . . quickly . . . quickly. I'll watch over you, darling! I'll show you. . . . Quickly, my darling! Now!" — And Jake Halloran heard, and he smiled and the Cheetah struck.



L. Ron Hubbard's book DIANETICS has created a tremendous stir, not only among the enthusiasts of science fiction, but in the general publishing world. Without benefit of any perceptible advertising appropriation, without that intangible alignment of radio, television, mention by Winchell-Lyons-Cerf-et-al. known in the trade as "promotion," it has vaulted near to the top of the bestseller lists. A book by a first-rate science fiction writer offering radically new theories of mental therapeutics would of itself be worthy of primary notice in these columns; becoming — unaided, as it were — a bestseller, it merits a longer and more responsible review than could be written by either of us laymen. We have therefore commissioned a critique from an eminently suitable reviewer: C. Daly King, Ph.D., member of the American Psychological Association and the New York Academy of Science, author of three books and numerous articles on psychology . . . and also an excellent purveyor of popular fiction, detective, fantastic and scientific!

Dianetics: a book review

by C. DALY KING, PH.D.

DIANETICS: *the modern science of mental health*, by L. Ron Hubbard. New York: Hermitage House. xxvii, 452 pp. \$4.00.

THIS volume is full of assertions and claims, and frequent reference is made in it to "scientific evidence," but your reviewer could find no item of such evidence in its 400-odd pages. Unsupported assertions are not evidence and, since the author presents every appearance of sincerity, one can conclude only that he is unfamiliar with the nature of scientific evidence. Diligent search has turned up the information that he is a Hollywood studio and radio writer, that he has contributed to 90 magazines, that he holds an undergraduate degree in Civil Engineering and that he is an experienced explorer. No one would deny that all of these are legitimate activities but they are not the usual qualifications of an expert in psychology.

The therapeutic claims of dianetics are so grandiose that only the strongest supporting evidence (for which mere assertion is substituted) could render them more than silly. *Sic*, dianetics will cure your colds, eliminate all psychological ills, raise your I.Q., make you more energetic and *happier*, provide you with better sensory "perceptics" of all modalities, prevent any possible relapse, and so on, and so on. (pp. 6 *et al.*) Diabetes and cancer are yet to be overcome but these problems are soon to be attended to. (p. 93) Since Mr. Hubbard implicitly states that he and some of his followers administer the dianetic techniques to applicants, they themselves would do well to apply for membership in the American Psychological Association in the Division either of Consulting Psychologists or of Clinical and Abnormal Psychology and to *meet the qualifications of such Division*. Any person who submits himself to psychological therapeutics by a practitioner lacking those qualifications deserves just what he gets.

A necessarily simplified version of the dianetic technique is this: reducing the suppressions and repressions that dwell in the analogical unconscious or subconscious to a series of "engram banks" (p. 51), the victim is advised to "recount" all these injurious "engrams" to an "auditor" until they disappear, when all will be well. The assumption is made that "recounting" is more than simply recalling and relating, it is "returning" (pp. 12, 13) and relating; it is not merely a mental memory function but instead it is "reliving" (pp. 12, 13) the given experience, including all its original sensory, emotional and other elements. It is claimed, again without any adequately presented evidence, that the ordinarily abnormal person possesses that ability. (pp. 11 ff.)

The book employs an extravagant terminology in which normal is called "clear" (p. 8) and abnormal "preclear" (p. 176), the term, normal, being applied in the sense of its too common scientific misuse and constant popular abuse. "The analytical mind" (p. 43), "the reactive mind" (p. 50) and "the somatic mind" (p. 39) are all old friends, now appearing behind new whiskers that sometimes distort whatever was of value in the original concepts. The well-worn "psychosomatic" (p. 92) is used habitually as if it really meant something. Concept = retained percept = sensation (p. 46) — which is mere terminological confusion. For some oddly pretentious reason we also have "sonic" for auditory recall (p. 14), "visio" for visual recall (p. 14), "perceptic" for perception, *et cetera*. A key-term of the work is "engram,"

a word long familiar (and long since discarded) in the professional literature, coined by Richard Semon of Vienna rather earlier than 1920 and assigned by him to "the abiding effects of transient stimuli upon irritable living tissues." This term is appropriated by the author (without the slightest acknowledgement to its originator) and blandly re-defined as "a moment of 'unconsciousness' containing physical pain or painful emotion and all perceptions and not available to the analytical mind as experience." (p. 39) (In scientific writing it is not permissible to appropriate another worker's terms without acknowledgement, by the simple expedient of re-defining them erroneously.) We have also the affected pseudo-equation, thus: $PV = ID^x$, an attempt to give a scientific appearance to the essentially meaningless formulation: the potential value of an individual or group is his or its intelligence multiplied by his or its dynamic to the x th. power. (p. 40) In addition we are given three highly pretentious diagrams that are likewise essentially meaningless, since what is charted is purely subjective speculation. (pp. 20, 421, 425) And finally (although this comes first) (pp. 32 ff.) four "axioms" are presented which for some obscure reason are called "dynamics" but which certainly are not axioms in the accepted meaning of the word, for there is nothing self-evident about them. In an appendix (pp. 415 ff.) there appears to be an attempt to defend these elaborations by a "practical" or trade-school-technician definition of science that is but one step removed from the Moscow scientific definition-by-political-expediency, contributed, typically enough, by a nuclearist.

What this whole position amounts to is no more than a psychoanalytic implication which has been present all the time; and the psychoanalysts ought to be (perhaps some of them will be) pretty sick that they haven't seen it themselves long ago. According to their doctrine all psychological troubles spring from the unconscious or subconscious; yes, and what are these? Assuredly they do not come from Mars or Hades and very plainly they *do* arise from the life experiences of the subject. If all the unconscious and/or subconscious elements deriving from a man's experience are made conscious, then there isn't any unconscious and/or subconscious left; *ergo*, there being no remaining source for psychological ills, there can be no remaining psychological ills. Q.E.D. That is the crux of Mr. Hubbard's argument and (but only from the psychoanalytic point of view) it strikes this reviewer as incontrovertible.

But the errors and disabilities of subjectivism permeate the entire proposition. By definition science is a procedure dealing *exclusively* with phenomenal occurrence and the objects of its investigations are the physical entities involved in such occurrence; conversely, any undertaking that does not so deal is not scientific. For all its pretence to the position of an exact science dianetics never deals with any physical entities of phenomenal occurrence and is no more scientific than is psychoanalysis or any other purely subjectivist activity. "Mind," for instance, is not even a phenomenal occurrence, much less the apposite physical entities, but instead it is a conceptual abstraction referring actually to the operations of the nervous systems; the neurological phenomena there proceeding really constitute the field of the physical entities scientifically involved. A so-called science of the "mind" is a rational contradiction in terms for the very simple reason that conceptual abstractions, even correct ones, are not phenomenal occurrences nor are they the physical entities therein involved.

As far back as 1912 Dr. Bernard Hart made this perfectly clear when he wrote: "The (subjectivist) psychological concept lays no claim to phenomenal reality. . . . An unconscious mental process is a phenomenal impossibility." (The Psychology of Insanity, Hart, B., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1912; p. 19.) In short, the concepts, such as "mind," of the psychological subjectivist are inventions deliberately made in order to offer a philosophically verbalistic, but never a genuinely scientific, explanation of the data that come to his notice; they are not only *ad hoc* but admittedly they are concepts-by-postulation whose reference is merely analogical. This necessary requirement of 'as if,' however, has been speedily forgotten and today the psychological subjectivist has managed to persuade himself that he is speaking about something actually real in his bizarre and postulated vocabulary.

Meantime the more authentic researches of psychology have been making a slow but steady progress in correlating actual neurological phenomena with those of human behavior and experience, for when Mr. Hubbard tells us that "nobody really knows about structure" (p. 43), he is expressing an at best very uninformed opinion. Both neurology and psychology possess great masses of data and of validated conclusions as to both the structure and the functions of the apposite portions of the human organism, as well as to their experiential and behavioral correlates; and in these cases we *are* dealing

precisely with phenomenal occurrence and with the physical entities involved in it. Objective measurement, a scientific requirement, thus becomes possible; but only pretended or pseudo-measurement can be applied to conceptual abstractions or to the imaginary relations between them.

It may be that dianetics is a therapeutic art, either valid or invalid; in which case let it admit that its conclusions can never be more than plausible or implausible opinions. Of a certainty no number of Western Electric diagrams of the conceptual elements of subjective speculation can make it genuinely scientific.

Mr. King was, of course, given a free hand with his review; and the opinions expressed are his and not necessarily ours. Since his review has proved to be such a slashing attack on what one of his letters called "a sort of technocratic burlesque of psychiatry," we feel it only just to say that our pages are open to any equally cogent and reasoned rebuttal from any equally competent and responsible authority.

Incidentally, some readers have expressed surprise at the reference in our last issue to "dianætics." That happened simply because our proofreader, who had never heard of the Hubbard book, checked the word in the dictionary and found the long-established, etymologically correct form. The one stand on the subject that we do feel ourselves competent to take is that Mr. Hubbard's notions of spelling and etymology (and by no means in this word alone) are, to be polite, idiosyncratic.

Recommended Reading

by THE EDITORS

As THE upswing of science fiction in book form continues, a couple of trends have developed which cause us to address an urgent plea to all publishers: When you give first book publication to serials from old magazines, *please* pick stories whose prose and technique are at least up to the lowest modern

magazine standards. And when you publish a volume of short stories, *please* label it as such, without trying to con the reader into thinking he's buying a novel.

With those gripes off our chests, we can proceed to recommend some of the more pleasant recent publishing ventures:

SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS

Judith Merrill's *SHADOW ON THE HEARTH* (Doubleday) easily leads in the last few months, and in certain respects in the last few years or even decades; an intimate study of the domestic impact of atomic war, it's a sensitively human novel, terrifying in its small-scale reflection of grand-scale catastrophe. William Gray Beyer's *MINIONS OF THE MOON* (Gnome) is a conventional enough sleeper-wakes-into-retrograde-world story, but told with a fine blend of high romantic adventure and lively absurdity.

SCIENCE FICTION ANTHOLOGY

The laudable trend toward patterned collections continues with Donald A. Wollheim's *FLIGHT INTO SPACE* (Fell), an anthology so neatly constructed and well annotated, with one story to each major body in the solar system, that one wishes the writing, story by story, were up to the overall editing.

FANTASY NOVELS

At last the superlative magazine series by L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt, recounting Harold Shea's experiences with the mathematics of magic in alternate universes, is all in print in a completely revised and expanded form. *THE INCOMPLETE ENCHANTER* (universes of the Norse Gods and of the Faerie Queen) has been reissued by Prime; and Gnome has brought out for the first time the fuller version of *THE CASTLE OF IRON* (universe of Orlando Furioso). The last is in plot much the weakest of the two; but the whole series marks a high-point in the application of sternest intellectual logic to screwball fantasy.

REPRINTS AND REISSUES

Mary Griffith's *THREE HUNDRED YEARS HENCE* (Prime) is the second in a notable series of reprints of early American Utopian novels — an odd and delightful item of 1836 dealing with a strongly feminist future, and even more valuable to the collector and connoisseur than Prime's earlier edition of the anonymous 1802 *EQUALITY*.

The idea of usuform robots, i.e., mechanicals who are not necessarily humanoid, but are designed to accomplish a specific task with maximum efficiency, is not a new one in science fiction. But H. B. Fyfe's idea of a magazine editor's office manned (or plagued) with such robots is new — madly, hilariously so! We, who read some hundred manuscripts a week, would deeply appreciate the services of a mechanical assistant especially designed to synopsisize and appraise plots. It would certainly save eyestrain — although Mr. Fyfe, who has a sympathetic awareness of the perils inherent in editing, feels that there would be other, greater strains. He seems to think, for example, that the best adjusted robots can get psychoneurotic after a few months labor in an editorial office. Not only robots, say we!

The Well-Oiled Machine

by H. B. FYFE

HAVING tottered along the hall from the elevator to his office, "Ed" Moran paused to glare at the sign on the door.

STUPENDOUS STORIES . . . William Moran, Editor.

"Another day of it!" he groaned. "Why did Helen have to pick a fight again last night?"

He pushed open the door and entered, walking carefully.

"But even so, I didn't have to get loaded afterward, did I?"

A clacking typewriter fell silent as a level-toned voice answered his soliloquy.

"Do not know," said Sinner.

"I didn't ask *you*!" growled Ed.

Sinner was a secretarial robot, designed with four arms to facilitate simultaneous handling, correcting, and copying of manuscripts. Two of his hands had twenty-four fingers each, for typing. He was mounted on three small wheels, and gave Ed a chill on mornings after.

"How many synopses are ready?" he asked the robot.

"About a dozen, so far."

"I'll take them. Bring the rest in later!" Ed, convinced that his robots could tell when he was off beat, tried to sound brisk. "And get Doc to oil those wheels for you!"

"So you can keep telling everyone how the magazine runs like a well-oiled machine, ha-ha, because most of us are, ha-ha? You ought to hear Adder this morning!"

"Spare me that!" said Ed, retreating to his own office.

He threw the synopses of submitted manuscripts on his desk and sat down to hold his throbbing head. Just as it seemed that he would live, after all, someone tapped at his door.

Doc rolled in. He was an adaptation of the same model as Sinner and Adder, with digits specialized for repairing machinery, including other robots. His cylindrical body housed a "memory" file of repair instructions recorded on tape.

"Adder will not let me fix its voice box," he complained.

"Why won't he?" asked Ed.

"It says it does not have to, under regulations of individuality. It sounds terrible. Just lost two ads."

"Lost two ads!"

"They came in by visiphon. Sinner says that when the advertisers heard that voice over the mike, they got insulted."

Ed flipped a switch on his intercom.

"Advertising department!" a grating shriek answered.

Ed winced.

"You let Doc fix that voice box!" he ordered. "We can't go on losing money on your whims."

"Do not have to," rasped the robot. "Regulations say —"

"All right! I can't make you. But I *can* put you on another job. There's no rule against that."

He flicked the switch off.

"Go back and try again, Doc. I'm going down to see Liar."

Ed took the elevator down two floors to where the magazine was printed. He seldom penetrated deeply into this realm for fear of being run down by a big paper-carrying robot, or suffering some similar indignity. He had, however, formed a habit of chatting with the linotyping robot.

Liar — who claimed as an expert that it should be "Liner" or, at least, "Lyre" — was immobile because of his size and complexity, but he was the most educated machine Ed had ever encountered. He was equipped to proofread as he worked, and had accumulated an awe-inspiring hoard of misinformation.

Liar knew all about women — at any rate, as much as Ed's writers thought *they* knew. He knew even more about men, especially the type that was bound to win the girl and save the day. He often commiserated with Ed because the latter's chin was not more prominent, and because he was something less than six feet of bone and sinew.

"The best thing —" he began when Ed complained of headache.

"Never mind," said the man. "I keep telling you I can't get any rare, imported *xitchil* from Jupiter because there's no such thing. Human beings haven't even landed on Jupiter yet."

"Blaster Blaine did. In the June fourteenth book."

"Never mind," sighed Ed. "How are you coming here?"

"Almost finished." Liar did not pause in his work. "Be way ahead by afternoon. You got woman trouble, pardner?"

"What makes you think so?" demanded Ed, recoiling.

"You always get over-oiled when you have a fight with your girl. It is human."

"Which lousy story did you get that from?"

"You said so," answered Liar. "Now, I shall tell you how to handle her —"

"You think you will! You don't know Helen," Ed broke in.

"This worked for young Doctor Steele, in September, so listen! First, you give her the cold shoulder."

"Yeah?"

"That is right," Liar insisted. "They cannot stand it. Then, when she starts chasing *you*, knock her around a bit. Show her you are tough. They love it."

Ed shuddered.

"My dear tinker-toy," he said, "she has two brothers nearly your size. They tell me she once gave the big one a shiner."

"Well, of course . . . if you are timid — Next best thing is to shanghai her aboard a spaceship bound for Pluto."

"Who — *me?*"

"Occasionally," said Liar, "I realize how lucky I am to be well-designed for my job. I, at least, am adequate."

"I get along," retorted Ed. "Make a living, don't I?"

"We make it for you, Sinner says."

"*That* flat-tired can of stripped gears! The way he boils stories down, I'm not sure half the time what I'm buying."

"Do not worry. When the copy gets to me, I fix up anything that looks out of line."

"It's considered good for a magazine to get out of line at times," growled Ed, "but I doubt I could convince *you*."

"I just do what they built me for, and you know I do it better than anything else could."

Ed gave up. He listened to suggestions that he should woo Helen with anonymous gifts, or show her how important he was. Best of all, Liar assured him, was to rescue the girl from terrible danger. All the heroes did it. He *should* arrange to be slightly injured in the process. Liar thought that the magazine could carry on very well during his absence.

Ed said sourly that he would really like to give it a chance, and left. At the elevator, he heard his name called.

He turned and saw the illustrating robot, Arty, apparently on his way to deliver a batch of drawings. He had been trapped by a small pool of oil spilled upon the concrete floor where some trash had been collected for later disposal.

"That one-wheel drive they give you!" grumbled Ed, but pushed him over a few feet.

"Thank you," said Arty.

He remained there, training his photoelectric eye on Ed until the elevator robot shut the door and started up. Ed fidgeted. He did not quite know what to do about this. He hated to replace Arty with a new model, but all the heroes in the sketches were beginning to look like editor William Moran.

He returned to his office and found that the pile of synopses had grown during his absence. He sat down to read them after carefully discarding the top half-dozen — Sinner always favored one plot, wherein robots conquered the world.

Ed chose a page, glanced at the code number identifying the story and author to Sinner, and read:

Young Jack Hansen, pilot on the dangerous asteroid run, is left unconscious on the spaceship *Hawk*, which mutineers force the captain to abandon. The *Hawk* is soon afterward boarded by space-pirates seeking her fabulously valuable secret cargo, led by a beautiful blonde girl known only as —

Ed decided he really should be grateful for Sinner. He might have had to read it all. He took the next sheet:

On an expedition to the star Capella, brilliant young Dr. Martin is captured by cold-blooded, monstrous minions of Volvak, a mad Capellan who plans a ghastly experiment to destroy the Solar System. Volvak threatens the hero with torture to learn the headquarters of the humans, but the scientist escapes, aided by a beautiful blonde Earth girl who says she has forgotten her identity —

Ed reached into the bottom drawer of his desk. After two short nips, he felt better. He read on, finding one piece he could buy. On the bottom was a really off-trail story:

10:23 — Ed called on visiphon by beautiful blonde girl named Helen who, in his absence, conversed briefly with the synopsis robot.

He turned the page over. That was all.

At times, mechanical communication merely frustrated Ed. He crashed open the door, flourishing the message.

"Why didn't you *tell* me?" he roared, glaring at Sinner.

"Tell you what?"

"That Helen called. What's the idea of putting this at the bottom of the pile of synopses?"

"Last item in order of arrival," said Sinner reasonably.

Ed leaned against the wall, shutting his eyes tightly. Against truth, purity, or moral right you could sometimes prevail, he thought, but not against robotical logic.

"What did she say?" he inquired, as calmly as possible.

"If I did not write it down, it must have been of no interest."

"Let me explain," grated Ed, "that what bores *you* may not necessarily fail to interest *me*!"

He slammed the door and dialed Helen's number on his desk visiphon.

There was no answer. Was she waiting for him somewhere? Well, he would have to try again later.

Before he could work up a good case of self-pity at being saddled with such incompetence, the intercom buzzed.

"Ed," said Sinner's unabashed voice, "there is a Mr. Thorpe to see you. He is on his way in."

Simultaneously, a large, red-faced man charged through the door. His cinnamon mustache bristled as he glared about.

"Where's William Moran?" he demanded in a voice too small for him, while brandishing a mangled copy of *Stupendous Stories*.

Ed tapped his own chest modestly.

"You? The robot called you 'Ed' on the intercom."

"Short for 'editor,'" explained Ed for the thousandth time. "Just as he's 'Sinner' for synopsis."

"Then *you're* the jerk that ruined my story!"

"What?"

"Here it is!" shrilled Thorpe, beating upon Ed's desk with the magazine. "The best story I ever wrote. Real artistic integrity, and too good for your rotten comic book, if you want to know! And what did you do to it?"

Ed opened his mouth to ask, but got no further.

"You chopped the ending all to hell. Made the whole thing meaningless. Why? Was a fresh, new idea too much for you?"

"Let me get this straight," begged Ed. "You say someone tampered with your plot, which was . . . ah . . . original?"

"That's what I'm trying to get through your head!"

"Well, something should certainly be done. I think I know who did it. Suppose I let you talk with him?"

"Lead me to him!"

Ed called in Sinner to take Thorpe down to see Liar. Then he pressed a buzzer to summon Doc.

"Didn't I ask you to do something about Liar?" he demanded when the repair robot rolled in. "You were supposed to find a way weeks ago to stop his editing stories as he works."

Doc hesitated a moment in acute embarrassment.

"To tell the truth," he said, "I fear to tamper with as complex a mechanism as Liar. I am only a Model 255-C."

"Oh . . . get out!" growled Ed, discouraged.

After Doc had rolled out, he tried to get his mind on something pleasant. Nothing occurred to him. Except Helen. Had she called to say she was sending back his ring?

The visiphon chimed; Sinner had evidently left him a direct line while absent. A thin, dark-haired, angry man appeared.

"Now, listen here!" he bellowed. "I don't like being spoken to in that tone. You want to lose our account?"

Ed recognized the advertising agent who usually took the back cover for his client. The man must have clashed with Adder. He pulled himself together and began to talk like a ram-jet.

"Whew!" he sighed, some fifteen minutes later, turning off the visiphon after a masterly defensive engagement. "This has gone too far. *Sinner!*"

When the synopsis robot appeared, Ed ordered him to change offices and duties with Adder temporarily. He thought, then, of slipping out to lunch, but it was *too* early. First, he had to learn whether Thorpe had been disposed of. He phoned Liar.

"He just left," was the report, "a sadder but wiser man."

"That's a cliché," Ed objected automatically.

"There is no better description," Liar assured him.

Ed agreed presently, when Thorpe slumped into his office.

"I must say," the writer mumbled, "I didn't realize the depths to which I had sunk. I shouldn't blame you, of course."

"What do you mean?" asked Ed.

"I never knew how snugly I fitted the mold, until your robot downstairs explained to me just what rules he observes in doing your editing for you."

"In doing *what* for *whom*!"

"He told me exactly which plots he lets past. I could count them on one hand. I knew your tired magazine was stereotyped, but to think that I, Alexander Thorpe, am no better than a robot, grinding out the same pattern time after time —"

"Now, wait a minute —!"

Thorpe ignored him. The writer's features, no longer flushed with rage, sagged fleshily. He drooped like a ten-year-old whose dog had been run over.

"It's true enough," he complained, snuffling faintly as he tossed his copy of the magazine onto the desk with a heavy, hopeless motion. "Even the

illustrations, by golly! They *do* all look like you. I wouldn't believe that part at first . . ."

"Listen!" exclaimed Ed. "I have troubles of my own, and —"

Thorpe dragged out a handkerchief and blew a ringing blast.

"I knew you wouldn't understand. An artist must maintain his standard of integrity. He becomes a crass commercialist like you if he permits the prostitution of his artistic —"

"Just a second," Ed interrupted resignedly.

He reached into the bottom drawer. Having company, he groped again, further back, and came up with two glasses for supplementary equipment. Thorpe looked doleful but receptive.

The glasses were filled, emptied, refilled.

"Now," said Ed, "tell me all about artistic integrity . . ."

Some time later, Adder, now custodian of the outer office, opened the door to discover why his buzzer had not been answered.

Thorpe was criticizing Shakespeare, having already quoted at weary length from the works of John Ruskin, belligerently condemned Ingres and other French painters, and recited modern imitations of T. S. Eliot. It all sounded very erudite and impressive, provided Ed refrained from trying to make sense of it. The droning voice had a soothing, soporific effect.

"Visiphon call!" announced Adder in a raucous screech.

Ed grimaced and turned on his set. Thorpe continued to mouth phrases that seemed to have little or no semantic integrity. Helen's features appeared before Ed's startled eyes.

"Ah, so now you'll talk to me?" she greeted him.

"Wha — why, of course. Why not?"

"I wasn't going to wait, but your robot squawked out a big sales talk. Seemed to think I'd *pay* for your attentions!"

"Oh, no, certainly not! The other way around, if anything . . . what am I saying? No! I mean —"

"You weren't very eager to answer my first call."

"Oh, er . . . something happened," said Ed lamely.

"Yes," Helen said suspiciously, "I think I can hear some of it happening now."

Ed hastily pushed the bottle out of the field of the scanner and requested Thorpe to shut his mouth for a few minutes.

"William Moran! Are you drunk? In the middle of the day?"

"Of course not! Tell her I'm not drunk, Adder!"

"Ed is not drunk," announced Adder stridently.

Helen flinched and backed away a few inches.

"Who *is* that?" she demanded.

"Just one of my writers, darling." (Thorpe clapped both hands to his temples and rolled his eyes resignedly toward the ceiling.) "You didn't think it was another girl, did you? You know I wouldn't look at another woman!"

"When that happens, I'll know you're dead," answered Helen acidly. "Now, listen! I may be losing my mind, but I'm going to give you one more chance to talk things over."

"No use now," mumbled Thorpe thickly. "If you sell your soul —"

"Keep quiet, will you!" hissed Ed.

"Don't whisper back while I'm talking to you!" ordered Helen. "Now, meet me for lunch and I'll listen to your excuses."

"I'm a poor excuse for a man," snuffled Thorpe. "I admit it."

"Well, admit it somewhere else!" snarled Ed. "Yes, of course, dear. Where shall I meet you?"

"I just want to tell you —" began Thorpe.

"He means *get out*!" Adder told him in horrible tones.

The writer blanched, dropped his empty glass, and departed. Adder followed him out as Ed took down the name of Helen's restaurant. He tried to make some progress then and there, but she cut off, obviously bent upon punishing him with suspense.

Finding himself alone, Ed pushed the buzzer for Adder.

"Where did our literary soul flit off to?" he inquired.

"Out to get drunk, he said. I have more synopses."

"Oh, well, give them here. I have half an hour before I can leave. Take that empty with you on the way out."

When the door had closed behind the robot and the bottle, Ed picked up the first effort of his new manuscript analyst:

Don't get trapped like young Dr. Jim Watkins in the depths of the ice caves of Pluto! But to solve the mystery of the beautiful blonde Earth girl caught in the ice, to learn what terrible menace threatened three planets, to give the readers of *Stupendous Stories* forty thrill-

packed pages of drama and adventure, buy this manuscript! You can't afford to publish the magazine without it!

The page slipped from Ed's limp fingers.

"What have I done?" he breathed. "*What have I done!*"

Adder had changed offices, but he was still an ad-robot. Ed fumbled for the next sheet.

This is the best piece of work to come into this office since the present analyst began to synopsise scripts. Amid the blazing heat of the desert a fugitive bearing a dreadful secret flees from the most inhuman — literally the most inhuman — gang of murderers ever conceived. Then, suddenly, a mirage, a beautiful blonde girl from nowhere, a clue in an ancient language, and other startling developments. You would be crazy to pass this one up, Ed!

"I am already!" Ed yelled. "That I don't spot-weld all you gadgets to the ceiling proves it! Am I sunk so low around here that I have to read all this stuff *myself*?"

It occurred to him that his behavior varied somewhat from normal. At least, he ought to have a robot in to stand before the desk, so that he would seem not to be talking to himself.

He threw aside the synopses, snatching the bottom one to give his conscience the feeling of having reached the end.

Why had young Eddie McGinnity committed suicide? Who was the mysterious blonde in the picture on his desk? Should Dr. Kleffer believe the despairing note describing his hopeless love? What could Eddie have offered a girl accustomed to every luxury . . . ?

"Beats the hell out of me!" sighed Ed. "Why did he try, then? In his place, I'd . . . well, that's different."

He stared unseeingly at the pile of papers.

"Come to think of it," he asked himself, "what *am* I doing? How long am I going to let her toy with me?"

The answer seemed simple. He had more troubles now than he could handle. He would have to give up some of them.

"I'll start by not meeting Helen," he decided firmly. "If I see her, I'll weaken, and we'll go through it all again. I can't hold my own here with a hangover every other morning."

He forced himself to set to work planning a future layout. Somehow, he

felt little of the elation he had thought would accompany the decision, but he resolved to stick to it.

Thus, in mid-afternoon, he was shocked by a sense of unfairness when Helen invaded the office.

"Now, listen here!" she greeted him, stalking unannounced into his sanctum, followed by Adder. "I don't intend to be stood up by you, even if it *is* for the last time!"

"Adder!" cried Ed, his determination undermined by the sparkle and color derived from her anger. "Show the lady out!"

He snatched up an illustration by Arty and pretended to be engrossed in the sight of himself in a spacesuit wielding a massive club against a floppy, bug-eyed monster. He managed to ignore the scuffle and the soprano tones of protest.

A genuine cry of pain, however, snapped his resolution like a soap bubble. He looked up to see Helen sitting on the floor of the outer office, wearing a very surprised expression.

"Adder!"

Ed charged out from behind his desk.

"You cast-iron idiot! I said '*show*' — not '*throw*'!"

"I regret," apologized Adder in ghastly tones. "Perhaps I *do* need rewiring as Doc says. May I help you, Miss?"

"You keep your octopus claws off me!" Helen requested rather shrilly.

She yanked down her skirt and scrambled unassisted to her feet, where she stood feeling tenderly for bruises and glaring impartially at both of them.

"I'm terribly sorry —" Ed began.

"I'm not!" snapped his lady, with a look that crackled blue sparks across the room. "Now I know you for the brute you are. I'm leaving before you have more of your monsters manhandle me!"

She whirled through the door and tapped angrily down the hall.

Ed ran to follow. He heard Adder's gears clash slightly as the robot shifted into high and rolled after him.

"Helen! Wait!" he called.

The elevator door opened. Sinner, returning from some errand, rolled out. Watching over her shoulder, Helen ran directly at him, but Sinner was adjusted by design to avoid injuring humans. He thrust out all four arms and caught her before they collided.

"Hold on, Sinner!" cried Ed.

He and Adder caught up — the latter's brakes squeaking — whereupon Helen ceased struggling.

"Let her down," said Ed. "Now, young lady, you're going to stay and listen to what I have to say!"

"Why, you . . . you . . . *kidnapper!*" Helen exclaimed. "You can't keep me here against my will. There are still laws."

"I just want you to see my side —"

"I've *seen* the hidden side of you! You have me practically beaten to a pulp, and a prisoner in this *den* of yours, and you want me to listen to more of your lies!"

Ed opened his mouth to protest, and immediately had it closed by a hard-swung handbag, dainty in design but conventionally loaded. He staggered back. Helen seized the opportunity to dive into the elevator. The door slid shut before Ed could force intelligible orders past his numbed lips.

He knew the elevator robot would not stop between floors. Ed ran to the stairs and hurtled down, four steps at a time. At the landing, his knees bent from the impact. Still, he managed to reach the elevator exit on the next floor before Helen stepped out.

She saw him coming and shrank back. The door closed in his face again. The indicator crept down toward Liar's domain.

Ed gasped in a breath and tottered back to the stairs. He took this flight only two steps at a time. Consequently, Helen had already run out of the car when he reached the bottom.

"Look out!" he shouted.

The girl ducked back just in time to escape a big truck-robot, lumbering past with a huge roll of paper for the presses. Ed swooped down on her at a determined stagger.

"Let me go!"

"Helen," he said desperately, "you know I love you."

"Let me go, dammit!"

"Would I go through all this if I didn't?"

The elevator was ascending in response to urgent buzzing from above, leaving beside them a robot who had rolled up to board it.

"Are you going to let me go?"

"Are you going to listen?" demanded Ed. "*I love you!*"

"Why?" demanded a voice behind him.

Ed jumped, and looked around. Helen stopped squirming and peered around his shoulder. Arty was regarding them attentively.

"Why not?" asked Ed in a small voice, abashed at having made a private matter spectacularly public.

"I understand it's a matter of chemistry," he added, more firmly. "Perfectly logical."

"Do you consider her more pleasing than I?"

"Well, naturally. When she wants to be nice, she can."

"Then I hate her!" announced Arty distinctly.

"Huh?"

"I shall immobilize her," said the robot, advancing.

"Willy," murmured Helen worriedly, "I don't think it likes me."

Arty reached out for her. Ed thrust Helen aside and tried to push Arty back. He was gently but firmly lifted into the air.

"Doc!" he bawled, hoping desperately that the repair robot might be on the floor.

He thought he heard a distant answer as Arty set him down to one side. Helen, suddenly pale, retreated slowly along the wall toward Liar, who, designed immobile, simply continued working.

"Arty, stop it!" ordered Ed, striving for a tone of authority.

He ran up behind the robot, hoping for a chance at the cut-off switch; but Arty wheeled and shoved him away. In the distance, he saw Doc speeding up an aisle toward them.

"Run, Helen!" he yelled, trying again to reach the switch.

This time, he was shoved with such force that he tripped and fell across the pile of trash that had been swept there earlier. There was a clatter of cans and broken glass. Ed felt something slippery on his hand. A scared glance relieved him; it was only some heavy oil from a nearly empty gallon can.

"Remain there!" Arty ordered Helen vindictively. "I will catch you presently."

The robot turned solicitously to pick Ed up.

"I regret."

"Oh, don't think anything of it," said Ed pleasantly.

He made no effort to have Arty set him down quickly, because he had

brought the can up with him. He shook it gently behind his back, feeling the last of the oil spurt out.

"You must not hurt yourself," said Arty. "I . . . I . . . I cannot move. What is wrong?"

Ed felt himself casually held aside so that Arty could see the floor. The oil had spread. The robot's drive wheel was spinning uselessly in a broad slick.

"You have tricked me," Arty accused.

Ed saw the elevator door open as Adder and Sinner arrived from above. Doc was scooting up from the other direction. Helen edged closer, with a scared expression and a board from the trash pile.

"You have frustrated me," said Arty.

"What do you think you're doing to me?" countered Ed. "Sinner, Adder, come over here!"

"I shall immobilize them!" threatened Arty, watching the other robots as they rolled in front of Helen.

While Ed had diverted attention to the others, Doc had arrived. He crept up behind Arty in low gear, then suddenly flicked out a metal arm. In the tense silence, a sharp click was audible. Ed was dropped abruptly as Arty's internal humming ceased.

"Oh, boy!" he sighed. "Better push him into your shop, Doc, until we can order a new one."

"Darling!" said Helen.

"Huh? Put down that board. You scared me half to death. Suppose you'd missed the robot and hit me!"

"You saved my life," said Helen.

"Oh, it wasn't that bad," said Ed, watching Sinner and Doc wheel the inert drawing-robot away.

"Yes, it was! That nasty gadget! I give up."

"What?"

"I'm sorry. I never realized how important you are and how dangerous your work is. At least, I won't have to worry about any pretty office wives."

"Now, now, these things don't happen every day, do they, Adder?"

"Not *every* day," answered Adder. "I wonder if I had better have Doc rewire me this afternoon?"

"You do sound a little . . ." Helen paused delicately.

"To please an accessory of Ed's, I will have it repaired."

"Ohmigod!" muttered Ed. "Let's get out of here."

Sinner came rolling back.

"Liar wants to see you," he reported.

"All right," said Ed. "You two take the lady up to my office."

He saw them into the elevator, then walked over to Liar.

"Now will you admit I was right?" the latter greeted him.

"About what?"

"How to handle women. Sinner told all on his way back. Fortunately, you did exactly as I told you."

"What do you mean?" demanded Ed.

"First, you got Adder to beat her up —"

"That's an exaggeration if I ever —"

"—after giving her the cold shoulder to get her interested. Then you held her here against her will, which was almost as good as kidnaping her into space."

"I just wanted to explain —"

"Of course. I *understand*. Was it not my idea? And, finally, you did just as I advised: rescued her from terrible danger."

"Now, wait!" protested Ed. "The excitement wore her down, that's all."

"Nonsense! That gets them every time. Have I not just now put it into print three times running? I blame myself only for forgetting to tell you about the clinch, now that the time has come to end the story."

"Tell me about . . ." murmured Ed.

He had a nightmarish feeling that something in Liar's premise was fantastically wrong, despite its pragmatic functioning; but he had other business. He drew himself up.

"Never mind, Liar," he said firmly. "That is one little job I can do better than any of you fancy gadgets."

He turned and hurried off to attend to it.



Who today knows Ernest L. Thayer? Very few. But no American who has ever suggested immediate mayhem for an umpire can ever forget Thayer's epic of baseball's greatest goat, "Casey, mighty Casey." Remember, now? And how many of you were fortunate enough to hear De Wolf Hopper's immortal rendition of that dread day in Mudville when the voice of the umpire was the voice of doom as he solemnly intoned "Str-r-rike three" and Casey slunk from the plate into eternal opprobrium? "And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout; but there is no joy in Mudville — mighty Casey has struck out!" Hopper's interpretation of Thayer's poem resulted in a deathless piece of Americana. Now we have been lucky enough to discover that Ernest Thayer has a true spiritual descendant in Larry Siegel and, as proper fare for World Series time, we bring you (from the "American Legion Monthly") Mr. Siegel's own epic of how, through the good offices of one John J. McGraw, mighty Casey was allowed another turn up at the plate. And we hope that Mr. Siegel will be as lucky as Ernest Thayer was in finding a proper interpreter for this stirring chronicle of Casey's come-back!

Another Chance For Casey

by LARRY SIEGEL

CASEY walked slowly across the cloud and went up to the big golden gate. He took his bat off his shoulder, and for the 12,123rd time he rapped loudly with his fist. Nobody answered and he stepped back. He looked up at the hand-lettered sign over the gate and read for the 12,123rd time —

WITHIN THESE SACRED PORTALS DWELL THE SPIRITS OF
THE SHINING LIGHTS OF BASEBALL. NO TRESPASSING!
SIGNED, A. DOUBLEDAY, C.O.

Casey knocked on the gate again. Suddenly he heard someone approaching from inside. A few seconds later the door was thrown open, and a chunky

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figure poked his head out. "Well, well, if it ain't old Casey again," the figure said. "What do you want this time — as if I didn't know?"

"Mr. McGraw," said Casey, "I want in."

"Oh you do, do you?" said McGraw, cocking his head and grinning sarcastically. "Look, Casey, I been telling you for the past twenty years and the guy before me at the gate told you for another twenty years that we don't want failures in here. Do you see what that sign up there says? 'Shining light.' You ain't a shining light. What right has a flop to come in here and play ball with guys like Matty, the Babe, and the Big Train?"

"I ain't a flop," said Casey.

"Oh you ain't?" McGraw came back. "What do you call that day in Mudville when you whiffed — V-Day? *And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout, but there is no joy in . . .*"

"Can it, Mr. McGraw," said Casey sensitively. "That damn poem is driving me nuts. Look, I been upstairs for around forty years now. I like it pretty much. But if I can't get inside *this* gate, I might as well be stationed downstairs in the other place."

"Look, Casey," said McGraw, "when anybody mentions your name, what do they think of? A big bust, right? Now how would it look to anyone if I brought a big bust inside these gates?"

"Mr. McGraw," said Casey, "didn't any of the guys inside ever flop once?"

"I suppose so," said McGraw, "but nobody made a fuss about it."

"That's what I'm driving at," said Casey. "Nobody looks at my overall record. All they think about is that single lousy day in Mudville. In case you didn't know it, I was a shining light up till then, but I never got another chance after that strikeout. I think it's time I got another chance — right now."

"What do you mean, 'right now'?" asked McGraw.

"Well," said Casey, "today I spoke to some guy who just arrived up here from the U.S.A. He told me about some moving pictures he's been seeing — whatever *they* are — and in them there are stories about guys from up here who get a chance to go downstairs to earth to take care of unfinished business. Now, I got unfinished business in Mudville. If you could fix me up with a little pass, maybe I . . ."

"Don't be nuts, Casey," said McGraw. "It's too much trouble to get those passes. And even if I could get one, why should I give it to *you*?"

"Because you guys owe it to me," said Casey. "Every man who gets a rough deal should get another break."

"Supposing," said McGraw, "that I got you a pass and you flopped again, would you swear that you'd never bother me again?"

"I swear," said Casey.

"On this?" asked McGraw, holding out a faded copy of *The Sporting News*.

"On this," said Casey solemnly, as he dropped his bat, removed his cap, and placed his left hand on *The Sporting News* and his right hand in the air.

"Wait here," said McGraw, "I'll be right back."

Casey whistled softly as he paced the cloud. He tugged at the large square peak on his woolen cap. He fidgeted with his black stockings. He kicked star dust out of his spikes, and he swung his big bat back and forth.

An hour later McGraw opened the gate again. "Casey," he said, "you'll never know what I went through for you. They don't give these passes to just anybody, you know; and I had to speak to everybody all the way up before I got any place. Even then I didn't do too well. The best I could get was a one-hour pass with an extra six minutes for traveling."

"If there's a game on at Mudville, that's all the time I need," said Casey.

"Yeah, there's one going on now," said McGraw. "One of the spotters inside gave me the dope. Right now it's three minutes to three, Mudville time. You gotta be back here three minutes after four, their time, and I wouldn't be A.W.O.L. if I was you. The elevator operator will give you an hour and six minutes worth of mortal fluid. Don't try to connive for more 'cause the officers up here are strict about those things. Oh yeah, before I forget, don't be coming back with wild stories because somebody'll be watching every move you make."

With that, McGraw gave Casey the pass and closed the gate. Casey went to the elevator on East Astral Street, took his proper amount of fluid, and in a short while he was zooming through space with unbelievable speed.

A minute later the elevator stopped, and Casey got out. He found himself in a dark corridor. He looked around and up ahead he saw a light. He followed the light, came to a few steps, went up the steps, and discovered that he was standing in a dugout. About a dozen men were sitting around on a long bench peering intently at the field in front of them. They didn't see him. What strange outfits these guys wear, Casey thought. They had the

word "Mudville" written across their shirt fronts, just as he did, but everything else was different.

Casey turned and looked out on the field. An electric shock shot through him. Old familiar memories stirred within him. The sight of uniformed men battling on a diamond. The sound of horsehide hitting against wood. The chatter in the stands. The scent of earth and sweat. All these things made him feel as if he were back home after an eternity in prison.

Casey saw a squat, elderly man sitting nearby, and he sat down next to him. "What's the score?" asked Casey.

"One all, top of the 7th," the man said, without looking at Casey.

"Who you playing?" Casey asked.

"Fallsburgh," the man said.

"Old Casey could break the tie," Casey said nonchalantly, as he leaned back and propped his feet up against the wall.

The man stiffened like a cut of frozen meat. His mouth opened and closed five times, but he didn't speak. Then he turned and looked at Casey for the first time. "Holy mackerel!" he said. "Who are you? Where'd you get that circus suit? And what's the idea of cursing in this dugout?"

Casey locked his hands behind his head and pushed his cap over his eyes lazily. "All I said is that old Casey could break the tie."

The man jumped to his feet. "Look, Mac," he said, "I'm Pete Morgan. I been managing this outfit for ten years. This town ain't hard to get along with, but what you just said is like swearing in church around here. Do you know that we refused to play the New York Yankees an exhibition game here last year because their manager's first name is the name you just said? Do you know we don't allow people from Kansas City in here? Do you know what the initials of Kansas City are? Don't say it! Do you know . . . say, who the hell are you anyway?"

"Well," said Casey, unaffected by the speech, "I just got in from . . ."

"Evansville!" Morgan broke in. "That's it! You're the new guy Sanders was supposed to send me from Evansville. But you ain't a young kid, and we didn't expect you till Wednesday. Let's see, Sanders told me your name, but I forgot it."

Casey started to say something, but all of a sudden Morgan let out a moan. The Mudville pitcher just threw a home run ball. "Damn!" said Morgan. "Can't that guy go one game without a gopher ball? Look, Mac,

why don't you go inside and have Charley fix you up with a good uniform. I don't know where you got the thing you're wearing, but those outfits went out with the Stanley Steamer."

"I don't have any time to change," said Casey.

"Oh, I see," said Morgan, regarding Casey strangely.

Mudville finally got Fallsburgh out and came into the dugout for the last half of the 7th. When the players saw the oddly-dressed figure who was relaxing on the bench, they turned to Morgan for an explanation. "Fellahs," said Morgan, "this here is a prima donna that Sanders sent us from Evansville. He picked up that suit he's wearing from a junk dealer in town. Now don't go annoying him or telling him to change into another uniform. You see, he doesn't have too much time." With that, Morgan winked at the men.

Casey lifted his cap from his face and said, "Hi, men." Then he got up, stretched, and said to Morgan, "When do I bat?"

"Well," said Morgan, "it's still early in the game. You can lean back and take it easy for a while. When the bases are loaded in the 9th with two out, I'll call for you."

"Thanks," said Casey. "I'd rather go in at a crucial spot. It'll look better upstairs."

"Oh, it sure will look better upstairs," said Morgan, glancing at the men and making a rotating motion around his ear.

Mudville went down in the 7th, and nothing happened in both halves of the 8th. It was 2-1, in favor of Fallsburgh, as the top of the 9th began.

"What time is it?" asked Casey.

"Twenty to four," said Morgan.

"I still got time," said Casey, loosening his shoulder muscles.

The first two Fallsburgh men singled. Morgan sprang to his feet and, leaning out of the dugout, he waved to the bull-pen.

"What are you doing?" Casey asked, chewing on a piece of grass.

"My wife just came in the park, and I want her to know where I'm sitting," said Morgan. "What the hell do you *think* I'm doing? I'm telling the relief pitchers to warm up. Tulley's about ready for the showers."

"What are relief pitchers?" asked Casey.

Morgan looked at him wearily. "Relief pitchers," he said, "relieve other pitchers."

"Oh, you got more than one pitcher?" Casey asked.

"Heavens, yes," said Morgan sarcastically. "We got all kinds of pitchers. Great big ones. Little skinny ones. And then we got . . ."

"Seems like a waste of money," said Casey, interrupting him. "We never had more than two. Sometimes only one."

"Now ain't that nice," said Morgan. "Strong-armed pitchers, just like in the old days. And how were their spitters working?"

"Well," said Casey, "McGowan only used his in spots, but Thompson threw his a couple of times an inning."

"Oh, my Lord!" said Morgan. "How long is this insane talk gonna go on?"

Tulley managed to put out the fire, and it was still 2-1, Fallsburgh, as Mudville came in for the last of the 9th. "Let's go, damn it!" said Morgan to the men as they came into the dugout. "Let's get back into this ball game."

The first two men made out. Then the next man singled, and the following man walked. It was now Tulley's turn to bat.

Casey got up off the bench, picked up his bat, and said to Morgan, "I think there's a chance that the bases won't be loaded this inning. I think maybe I better get up there now. It's getting kind of late, you know."

With that, he stretched and started climbing out of the dugout. "Now where do you think *you're* going?" asked Morgan, seizing Casey by the leg.

"I told you it's getting kind of late," said Casey. "Besides, I think they want action upstairs."

He broke loose from Morgan and ambled toward the plate. "The fool's actually gonna do it!" a player shouted at Morgan. "Do something!"

"The guy's nuts," said Morgan. "He's absolutely and completely goofy."

"Should I go out and drag him back?" another player asked Morgan.

"No," said Morgan, "let him bat. The guy's got more guts than brains. He'd be just crazy enough to . . ."

Casey was almost up to the plate. A curious buzz swept through the stands. Fans were leaning forward to get a better look at this quaint, picturesque figure who moved with a confident stride. Was it a gag? Who was he?

Suddenly in the stands old Doc Walker, number one baseball fan in Mudville — and still active for his 80 years, leaped to his feet. "If I wasn't sure," he said, "if I wasn't absolutely and positively sure that . . . that . . ."

"What is it, Doc?" somebody asked.

"No," said Doc. "Forget it. I felt like I was goin' loco for a minute."

Casey was now rubbing dirt on his hands. The umpire, a gigantic figure, went over to him, and bending down to dust off the plate, he asked, "You pinch-hitting?"

"That's right," said Casey. "It's getting late, and I figure this is a good enough spot."

The umpire walked to the screen and picked up his megaphone. He came back and asked, "What's your name, bud?"

"Casey. Why?" Casey said, taking a firm stance.

"Now batting for Mudville," the umpire bellowed, "CASEY! . . . Casey?" he said, dropping his megaphone and double-taking. "Casey? Well, I'll be —"

For a fleeting moment there was silence in the Mudville ball park. . . .

Then from that stricken multitude went up a maddened yell, like the sound of tortured devils a-screaming down in hell! The teeming stands were raging; there was chaos everywhere. How dare the name of Casey contaminate this air!

Pete Morgan in the dugout and all the Mudville herd were petrified like statues; they didn't say a word. Their necks were strained like stallions that are ready at the post. Their eyes bulged from their sockets as if they'd seen a ghost.

And now the roaring hundreds came moving from the stands, like groups of stalking panthers, but with weapons in their hands. Their prey was at the plate; on his shoulder was a bat. His crime? His name was Casey. What bigger crime than that?

But then the masses halted on their trip out to the plate. The umpire stood and faced them — a massive wall of weight. Six feet six inches tall he stood, and weighed three hundred pounds. And he made it clear he wanted no strangers on his grounds.

With a loud and booming voice he addressed the seething throng. And every word he uttered rang clearly like a gong. "Whoever lays a hand upon this batter's head, will have to deal with me. Now let's play ball," he said.

Casey heaved a little sigh as he stepped into his place. A funny little smile started playing on his face. Four thousand angry eyes watched him blow into his hands. Two thousand hostile tongues hissed venom from the stands. And when responding to their jeers he lightly tipped his hat, no stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat!

And now the rival pitcher got his sign and slowly rocked. And Casey's figure tensed, and his bat was set and cocked. And then the ball came winging — a whizzing blur of white. A whirling blob of fire, a lightning flash in flight. Close by the form of Casey the blazing horsehide sped. "Too high for me," said Casey. "That's a strike," the umpire said.

"Kill him! Kill the batter!" screamed an overheated fan. "Let's put an end forever to this flubbing, whiffing clan!" Calmly, Casey called for time and rubbed his bat with dirt. And then he smiled again as he fiddled with his shirt. "It was much too high," said Casey. "Two feet above my head." "It was right across your shoulders," the mammoth umpire said.

The Mudville stands were boiling like a pot upon a stove. They cursed the name of Casey and the fiendish spell it wove. But Casey took a toehold and signaled to the mound. And then the pitch came flying with a chilling, whistling sound. "Kind of low," said Casey. "Right around my shoe." "Your eyes are telling stories," the umpire said. "Strike two!"

"Fake!" roared the irate hundreds, and the echo answered, "Fake! Let's throw him in the river or burn him at the stake!"

Then Casey dropped his smile, and his lips were firm and tight. He had to do it now or spend eternity in night. He hitched his weary shoulders and dug his feet in earth. The next pitch would determine just what his name was worth.

And then the pitcher had his sign, and then began his rock. And somewhere in the distance it was tolling four o'clock. And now the ball came shooting from its gun upon the mound. It was heading far outside, just a foot above the ground. The batter took a lunge as he quickly arched his back. And then there was a gust of wind and then there was a crack! Away up in the stratosphere a leather horsehide flew. It danced up in the sunlight and it disappeared from view.

SOMEWHERE IN THIS FAVORED LAND THE CLOUDS BEGIN TO FORM. SOMEWHERE WINDS ARE HOWLING AND SOMEWHERE THERE'S A STORM. BUT THERE'S A DIAMOND FAR ABOVE, JUST WITHIN A GOLDEN GATE— WHERE THE SHINING LIGHTS OF BASEBALL TAKE THEIR TURNS UP AT THE PLATE. AND STANDING UP THERE NOW, BRUSHING STAR DUST FROM HIS SUIT, IS A HAPPY, SMILING FIGURE— CASEY, THE NEW RECRUIT!

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